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*THE COUNTRY.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE INVITATION.

‘JACQUETTA is our only prop. I can see nothing for it but to write to her. She will take us in,’ I say dreadingly next morning at breakfast.

We have given ourselves a night to sleep upon our plans, mindful of the saying that ‘the night giveth counsel.’ But small counsel or comfort have the weary hours brought us. Our prospects look as gloomy now as they did last night at dinner.

A hideous parody of a dinner it was, with Frances at one end of the table, I at the other, stonily determined, both of us, not to give way now or ever before the servants; making jerky conversation and painfully choosing the food which seemed least likely to stick in our tightened throats; horribly conscious of Robinson’s compassion and William’s curiosity.

I had wondered whether my swollen eyelids proclaimed their abnormal proportions most obviously when I looked down at my plate, or when I uplifted them to the topmost fronds of the fern in front of me. I determined to take note from Frances, who had wept longer and more copiously than I; I shot a quick, dim glance across the table, but the unaccustomed sight of the gay little face, swollen and tear-stained out of all recognition, even under the shadow of an extra large fringe of yellow hair pulled well over the eyebrows for the occasion, very nearly upset me.

We held ourselves rigidly upright, both of us, but even this

could not be pronounced an entire success, our usual attitude *en famille* being much less dignified and more of a lounge. However, the dinner, like all things earthly, came to an end at last; and so did the long evening, of which every minute presented a new and hitherto unthought-of development of our woful change of fortune.

‘That we should be brought so low as to have to ask Jacquetta to take us in!’ responds Frances, with a sigh.

‘It isn’t Jacquetta I mind,’ groan I; ‘it is Sir Joseph. *How* he will patronise us! *How* he will assure us that his generosity is as large as the ocean!’

‘Thank Heaven that we have the wherewithal to clothe ourselves!’ ejaculates Frances.

‘What a horrible idea!’ I say uneasily. ‘It will be bad enough to eat his food as poor relations on a long visit, but clothes of his would burn me to the bone, like that woman’s shirt burnt Hercules,’ with vague mythology.

‘Poor relations on a long visit!’ repeats Frances. ‘I *can’t* get my mind properly adjusted. You and I patronised by Sir Joseph Yarborough! And when he and Jacquetta have come here for their annual two days’ visit at the New Year we have never taken the trouble even to patronise him, but have killed off all the old frumps in the neighbourhood whom we wouldn’t have to dinner at any other time.’

‘I suppose there is nothing for it but to go to them for a while,’ I say dubiously. ‘It is very horrible to have to ask them, but I can’t think of anything else, can you?’

Frances shakes her head forlornly.

‘And we have always congratulated ourselves upon the slender limits of our family circle,’ she says. ‘Little did we think how we should one day long for an army of cousins and a regiment of uncles and aunts. At a moment like this how usefully they would have come in, instead of our being thrown solely and utterly upon the charity of one’s mother’s cousin, and such a second-rate cousin, too!’

‘I don’t know about our being thrown solely and utterly upon Jacquetta’s charity,’ I object, with an unhappy turn of my head. ‘There’s not so very much charity in taking in two girls for a visit; after all, they were for ever asking us there till they found out it was no use—and it will be no more than a visit. We only want time to make up our minds about the future.’

'I positively have not courage to think of the future,' murmurs my sister reflectively. 'Only one thing looms clearly and certainly before me, and that is that it will be the bounden duty of whichever of us has the chance, to marry the very first man who proposes, provided, of course, that he has the wherewithal to pay the butcher and the baker. How, *how* is our value fallen in the matrimonial market!'

'I wonder that you can harp upon that string to-day,' I return, all the more nervously irritated because my own thoughts had long ago flown in the self-same direction, only with a personal application to Allan Vaudrey which had added a hundredfold to their bitterness. 'I should think the latest family alliance was enough for the moment. Will anybody call upon Priestman, do you think, Frances?'

'Of course not; not even the meanest, scrubbiest person in the village, let alone the county, unless perhaps the Brackham curates take it in their day's work. Why, that has been her attraction! I feel certain of it! Uncle Frank has deliberately picked out someone to free him from the trammels of society.'

'Yes, Society in general, with a capital S, and our society in particular,' I finish. 'Well, he has done it with a vengeance. I will go and write to Jacquetta by this post.'

Jacquetta has been written to, and Jacquetta has responded—warmly, for Jacquetta is a warm-hearted person. She has bid us welcome to the heart and home of herself and her knight with effusive compassion, in an epistle abounding in notes of exclamation, directed principally against the cold-blooded misdoing of Uncle Frank and the hypocritical scheming of that low creature Priestman. She has explained at considerable length that she herself never did like Priestman, though of course she could not say so when we all considered her such a valuable servant and spoke so highly of her. Unreasonably enough this offends us, and we remark in tart concord that none of Jacquetta's abigails could hold a candle to Priestman—as a *maid*. She has appointed the earliest possible moment for our arrival, assuring us that she cannot endure the thought of our remaining at Billington an hour longer than is absolutely necessary, exposed as we are to the possible descent of the new mistress of the house.

'Nothing could be kinder,' I say, laying down the letter with a little sigh.

'She is positively delighted,' exclaims Frances. 'It is beyond her wildest dreams that she should ever be able to pat us on the back and declare that she will stand by us.'

'Well, and it is very good of her to stand by us. We shan't find many people in a mighty hurry to have that honour. What can she possibly get out of us in return?'

'Though we are not what we were, still a Nugent—a real genuine Nugent—must be a downright godsend for Jacquetta to flourish in the face of her Riverdale friends,' returns Frances, who is beginning to pick up again after four-and-twenty hours' complete prostration; 'not to mention the fact, Esmé, that the natives of those parts have probably never set eyes on two such good-looking young people as you and I. Sir Joseph has a tremendous *penchant* for pretty girls, you know. I shall cultivate Sir Joseph.'

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## CHAPTER V.

### GOOD-BYE TO BILLINGTON.

THE day of our departure has arrived.

We have said farewell to Billington. For the last time we have paced up the apple walk to Lilliput Cottage, where in the days of our childhood we used to play at keeping house, and dispense smoky tea to youthful guests.

For the last time we have pottered through the big orchard house, where the purple grapes hang ripening in the September sun. Many are the confidences Frances and I have exchanged under those selfsame vines, first about our dolls, then, not so very long ago, about our governesses; and now, in these latter days, about lovers. For the last time we have sat under the big cedar in front of the house and rested our eyes lovingly on its long straight lines, conning over and over again each mass of ivy, each climbing rose on its grey walls. For the fiftieth time I have sobbed out, 'Why wasn't I a boy? To think that if I had been a boy all this would have been my very own, and no one could have taken it from me!'

I have wept hot tears of rage and grief until my cheeks are blistered and my nose swollen.

Frances has taken it more calmly these last few days; she has realised that nothing can be done, and in true campaigning spirit, instead of dwelling on the hopeless past, has occupied herself in



sharpening her weapons for the future. In other words, Priestman not having been available, she has devoted most of her time to overhauling her wardrobe and preparing her frocks for conquest. With rapidity marvellous to me she has attuned her mind to the hideous fact that our comfort in the future will depend upon how pleasant we make ourselves to those around us, and has already turned over her stock-in-trade of charms as a pedlar his wares.

While I have passed my nights and days in bemoaning our woful fate and in making tearful farewell pilgrimages to every man, woman, and child on the wide acres of Billington, she has grappled with and accepted the hard truth, that from our high and independent estate we have indeed fallen, that we are utterly dependent upon Sir Joseph Yarborough for every luxury, nay, every comfort of life, and is preparing to act upon her convictions with commendable philosophy.

The carriage has come round to take us to the station. The house servants are lining the passage leading from our staircase to the front hall.

'Brutes!' I ejaculate inwardly as I catch sight of them on reaching the half-landing. 'One hint from them ten days ago and we should have been spared this.'

But for all that I cannot pass them without saying good-bye, richly though they deserve it. They are connected with Billington; they will be here when I am gone, and for one moment a pang of something nearly akin to envy shoots through me.

So I begin at the scullery-maids, tail end of the long line, and shake hands with each in turn.

'Good-bye, Barbara! Good-bye, Susan, Charlotte, Jane,' and so on until close to the front door I come to Duncan, the house-keeper, before whom I pause with far different feelings. She alone has refused to stay under the new *régime*, is leaving Billington this very afternoon, and is honestly disgusted at the state of affairs.

'Good-bye, Duncan. Be sure and let me know if I can do anything for you. You have my address. Good-bye.'

Then, turning to get into the carriage, I discover to my surprise that Frances is not behind me as I thought; she was close to me on the landing. I pause for a moment and catch sight of her only now coming downstairs.

Slowly she makes her way towards me, passing through the servants' ranks as if they had been so many nude Greek statues,

and she the historic British matron averting her eyes in disgust. She passes even Duncan with the same disdainful air and follows me into the carriage in perfect silence, her small white face composedly indifferent and her little head erect in the air.

'You might have said good-bye to Duncan,' I murmur reproachfully, as the footman mounts the box.

'Why should I?' she answers coolly. 'If she has not been a knave she has been a precious fool to be hoodwinked, with all her opportunities of knowing what was going on.'

'But you have been civil enough to her up till now.'

'Of course I have,' with unruffled tranquillity, 'and to all the others as well. They might have made themselves disagreeable over the packing if I had candidly explained the real state of my feelings towards them.'

On the way to the station Frances and I have another slight altercation. I hope the change in our circumstances is not going to make us quarrelsome; we have always got on so well together. Our present difference of opinion is over William the pert. Frances wants to take him with us to Riverdale to look after our luggage, and then send him back by the next return train.

'You really seem to forget what paupers we are, Frances,' I object impatiently. 'We must get accustomed to do without such luxuries as servants to travel with us.'

Frances arches her eyebrows in astonishment.

'My dear Esmé,' she says loftily, 'you evidently imagine that I propose paying William's railway fare. I told Robinson yesterday to give him enough money, and to book it to Uncle Frank as usual.'

I don't like this proceeding at all; it ruffles my pride, or, possibly, my temper; but I feel too miserable and too dejected to squabble with Frances.

We are driving past the Home Covert for the last time. We have left behind us the garden gate where Mr. Vaudrey said good-bye last Thursday; what ages ago it seems! And now we are skirting the walk in Beech Wood, where they always finish that day's shooting and where we used to stand and watch the last drive.

Only the other day I told Mr. Vaudrey I should be able to count how many times he missed, from that oak stump. He was to have come to us for our first shooting party.

How quickly Ellis is driving this afternoon! Here we are at the Brackham Lodge, and Mrs. Brady and all the children are drawn up to curtsy good-bye. They really are a very nice-looking family; I have always laughed so much at their big noses that I never noticed until to-day what bright eyes and pretty complexions they have.

'For Heaven's sake, don't begin to cry again, Esmé,' says Frances persuasively. 'Sir Joseph will take it so frightfully amiss if we present ourselves before him drowned in tears. We must try and make him believe it has been the desire of our existence to live with him.'

I acknowledge the justice of her remark and pull myself together again. Life has seemed to consist of pulling myself together these last few days, and a very disagreeable operation it is.

'Do I look as if I had been crying, Frances?' I ask anxiously, as our train steams slowly into Riverdale Station two hours later. I have been consulting the oblong mirror in the railway carriage with the depressing result usually accruing therefrom. How is it that railway companies always have such peculiarly humbling looking-glasses?

'N—no,' she replies, scanning me with critical glance. 'You look rather flattened, but you will be all right directly you have to talk.'

Jacquetta is at the station to meet us, and her welcome is effusive. We are enfolded in an ample embrace on the railway platform, and our hands are hotly and persistently squeezed during the short passage from the train to the Yarborough equipage, which is drawn up outside—money written all over its ensemble, from the shine on the newly painted panels down to the varnish on the footman's boots.

'You *poor* dear things!' exclaims Jacquetta, 'you can't think how I feel for you. It's more like a novel than real life to see two young girls brought up in every luxury, and then suddenly turned out of doors in this terrible way. My dears, henceforth you must look upon Riverdale Place as your home.'

Jacquetta is much excited. Her beady black eyes are twinkling fast; her face is flushed and heated even beyond its wont.

'You are very, very kind, dear Jacquetta,' I reply gratefully.

Gratitude is a new emotion for me, and I had no idea it was such an unpleasant one. I have had no need to be grateful to anyone hitherto, and it gives me the sensation of a trickle of cold

water down my back; I dare say the wholesale plunge into its billows which I see before me won't be more uncomfortable than this first sprinkling.

'Yes, indeed,' chimes in Frances; 'if it had not been for your kindness I don't know what would have become of us. And how are you, Jacquetta? And *dear* Sir Joseph?' leaning forward from her seat opposite, anxiety for the latest news of Sir Joseph's health written upon each feature.

He himself greets us with considerable dignity at the door of his big new red brick house.

'How are you, my dear girls?' (we have never been 'his dear girls' before). 'Believe me when I assure you that you are as welcome to-day as you would have been a month ago. This most disgraceful business has in nowise changed the affectionate feelings with which Lady Yarborough and myself have always regarded you.'

'You are very kind,' I say again; it is to be my stock remark apparently, but this time it comes out as stiff as a ramrod. Frances, however, is gazing with such artless admiration at our gallant protector, and her touching 'Dear Sir Joseph, that is *so* like you,' is given in such effective fashion, that he steps past me and pats her reassuringly on the back with a condescending

'Poor dear! Poor dear!' Then, afraid no doubt lest I should be overwhelmed with jealousy and despair, he turns round and bestows another pat and a gracious 'Poor dear!' upon me also.

Two girls in the background have been watching our benevolent reception with admiring awe. As we are convoyed through the hall by Sir Joseph and Jacquetta, the taller of the two murmurs in an audible gush—

'I can't be sorry for them. They are in luck's way, *I* think!'—which very proper sentiment is rewarded by a smile from Sir Joseph, and immediate notice of the right-minded speaker, a damsel with bold black eyes, an underhung jaw, and a figure which starts out unexpectedly in all sorts of places where it ought to go in.

'Miss Eva Fenton,' he says, with an introductory wave of his hand, 'a young lady who is good enough to brighten our house with her frequent presence.'

'Now that's quite putting the saddle on the wrong horse,' returns Miss Eva Fenton, smiling playfully at him; 'coming to your house always brightens *me* up, and I am sure,' turning to us for

the first time, having been too absorbed in beguiling her knight to acknowledge our bows before, 'all I can say is that I envy the Miss Nugents.' 'The Miss Nugents,' as she is pleased to call them, respond as becomingly as in them lies, but the smile of the elder Miss Nugent is constrained—the corners of my mouth feel as lively as cast-iron—whereas the younger Miss Nugent covers herself with glory by the pleased beam and affectionate glance with which she turns from Miss Fenton to Sir Joseph Yarborough, murmuring, 'I don't think we are much to be pitied.'

'Well, well,' says Sir Joseph, 'be that as it may, we needn't keep you standing here. I myself will conduct you around the house and gardens.'

Majesty offering to show one around Windsor could not have been more gracious.

Jacquetta interposes that we must have some tea first, but, that being despatched, does not further detain us.

She also is anxious to impress us with a due sense of her importance and to exhibit the large amount of red brick and acres of glass erected by Sir Joseph, in despite of which she has always felt a nobody at Billington. Much as she has talked of her tents, her flocks, and her herds, during her annual visits, she feels sure Frances and I have not realised the extent of her possessions, or we never could have treated her with such indifferent civility. She bears us no grudge for it, at least not now when we are in trouble, for Jacquetta's ample person encases a warm heart; but she will like showing us that her pineries are larger and her stables smarter, if smaller, than those at Billington.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FIRST DAY.

'We will take the house first,' says Sir Joseph as we emerge from the morning-room, a compact body of six, whose movements hinge upon the one soul inhabiting the person of our host.

The pilgrimage being entirely for our benefit, Frances and I are honoured with places at the right and left hands respectively of our leader and guide.

Jacquetta hovers close around; she is always ready and willing to share her Joseph's society with admiring damsels—has she not

been chosen for the chiefest among the fair?—but she likes all his little attentions to be paid well under her eye.

As to Miss Eva Fenton and her companion, they are not going to be left out in the cold for two new-comers who, though they may be fussed over as novelties by the fickle knight, yet cannot know the way about the mazes of his heart like true old friends.

So, hanging together as bees around their queen, those left perforce behind, as we wedge through a doorway, treading close on the heels of those in front, we start on our inventory of Sir Joseph's possessions.

'The drawing-room!' he exclaims with modest pride, throwing open a folding door and ushering us into a small world of blue—and of that particular blue which suggests unlimited aniline dye; a blue neither dark, nor sky, nor peacock, nor navy, but simply blue, bright, hard and steely.

Walls, sofas, and chairs are covered with the same shade of silk, and the carpet hits one in the face with the same cerulean hue. Knickknacks there are none. A few ornaments, mostly gilded—even the china seems to require an ormolu mount before passing muster—are placed upon the tables at solemn intervals. The draperies consist of white antimacassars, placed neatly and tightly across the backs of the chairs, and finely accentuating the shade of blue.

Anything more ugly and more costly, more suggestive of the largest possible bill at the upholsterer's, combined with the smallest possible modicum of taste, it would be difficult to imagine.

Before I can recover my breath, Frances has come to the fore.

'Charming!' she exclaims. 'Quite charming! Blue is much the prettiest colour for furnishing, and you have carried it so well throughout.'

Sir Joseph raises his shoulders in delicate disclaimer of her praise. I feel his eye upon me. My teeth are still on edge, but I know what is expected and endeavour to rise to the occasion.

'Charming!' I echo feebly.

'It is said to resemble the Queen of Italy's own drawing-room at the Quirinal,' remarks attendant nymph No. 2, Miss Hilda Davis.

But Miss Fenton distances us all in an easy canter.

'I don't believe any foreigner ever had his walls hung with silk of this quality,' she declares with an offended snort, and rubbing a piece of the window curtain between finger and thumb,

'It would make their rubbishy old brocades look thin and poor, I'll be bound.'

Sir Joseph beams genially around. I am glad you like it,' he says, 'and I think, as Frances most justly observes, that it is well carried out. Now, you will pardon me for saying it—nay, I am sure you will pardon me under the altered circumstances—but it always struck me as a great defect in what is termed the blue drawing-room at Billington—that it is *not* well carried out. The walls are blue, it is true; but the hangings, the carpet, the furniture, what are they? Mixed, very mixed.'

A vision of the fine old room with its mellowed walls and priceless brocades rises before me, and I turn abruptly aside.

'Quite true, Sir Joseph,' returns Frances promptly, with callous indifference to his slander. 'But you must remember it requires two things to produce a room like yours; first, perfect taste, and secondly, the money to carry it out.'

And so we make the round of house and garden.

Everything is brand-new, and odoriferous of money, not of a good income merely, thriftily administered with best foot foremost; but of money in abundance, and scattered with a lavish hand. Everywhere Sir Joseph pauses for, and expects, the most extravagant praise. I had arrived this afternoon fully intending to do the utmost in my power to please him, and by no means inclined to stick at a little toadyism; but what he demands, and what is evidently his daily bread, is flattery so broad and thickly laid on, that from sheer inability to exclaim any longer 'How noble you are! how rich, how grand!' I fall behind at last and, putting my arm through Jacquetta's, allow Miss Fenton to close in to Sir Joseph's deserted side. Then from afar I watch with grim amusement the rivalry between her and Frances. Miss Fenton is more thoroughgoing and plain-speaking in her choice of superlatives, but Frances' eyes are so sweetly caressing, her smile so full of tender appreciation, that Sir Joseph is perfectly satisfied, and feels himself a finer fellow than ever under her tactful treatment.

'How are we to keep it up, Frances?' I ask in despair two hours later, as we are getting ready for dinner. I have pushed open the door between our bedrooms and am surveying Frances disconsolately in the pauses of our toilette.

'Heaven alone knows!' she answers.

'He never went on like this at Billington,' I continue dimly, struggling with an obstinate curl that will not pile itself



on the top of my head as smoothly as it ought—there are moments when I sigh over the loss of Priestman as a maid even more deeply than I bemoan her acquisition as a relative.

‘Because no one listened to him,’ says Frances.

‘What a strange experience it must have been for him!’ I remark, with a retrospective giggle; ‘such a big man as he thinks himself to be made so very little of! He is kind-hearted after all not to visit it on us now.’

‘What shall we wear this evening?’ asks Frances, too much absorbed in the present moment to heed my musings.

‘Our pink?’ I hazard tersely.

‘I think we had better rise to the white,’ she says reflectively, pulling out the golden tendrils of her hair into artistic disorder; ‘so much depends upon first impressions, and Jacquetta informed me in a mysterious whisper as we came upstairs that Mr. Bryan Mansfield was coming to dinner.’

‘And who on earth is Mr. Bryan Mansfield, that we should put on our white gowns for him?’ I ask in contemptuous astonishment.

‘I can’t tell you who he is in so many words,’ returns Frances gravely, ‘but my sixth sense informs me that he is moneyed. Those awful girls were bickering over him this afternoon and—well, do as you like, but I shall put on my white gown. We can’t afford to lose one chance now. Our picking and choosing days are over.’

So, she arrayed in white, I in pink, we descend to the drawing-room, where Sir Joseph commands the blue world from his vantage post on the hearthrug. He looks a great dandy in the evening, when just fresh from the hands of his valet. Indeed, it is at all times evident that he respects his person, but in the heat of the day an unseemly little smudge is apt to appear at the corners of his moustache, and his ebon locks straggle thinly asunder. The least disarray in the panoply of charms is fatal at his time of life. By the way, I wonder what his time of life exactly is. Like the attorney’s daughter, he

Would pass very well for forty-three  
In the dusk with the light behind him,

but in broad daylight he might be a hundred; and certainly it is not only his moustache that is dyed.

Miss Fenton is all giggles and excitement. Largely bedizened with steel ornaments and with tags of ribbon sticking out in

unexpected places, she is evidently in full cry. The object of her attentions is a dark man lolling on the sofa beside her, whom she is playfully fanning when we enter the room.

'Mansfield,' says Sir Joseph, turning sharply round; and Mr. Mansfield, who has, it is clear, been primed beforehand, rises and follows his host towards us. 'Allow me to present Mr. Bryan Mansfield,' with a flourish of the hand to usward, as of a salesman towards his wares; and indeed are we not his wares, and is it not most kind of him to so speedily introduce us to a customer?

'Mr. Mansfield is contemplating the purchase of an estate in your own county of Loamshire,' magnificently appropriating the county on our dispossessed behalf.

Mr. Mansfield is inclined to be stout, and his attractions are of a barber's-block order—big black eyes, smooth black hair, a neatly pointed black moustache, and a straight nose.

'Nice county, Loamshire,' he says. He has bowed to us both, but fixes the black eyes steadily on me as he speaks. 'My doctor has turned me out of the City, and so I'm looking for a place in the country. Everyone tells me I can't do better than Loamshire.'

I smile vaguely. I don't like fat men, nor dark men, nor second-rate men; and Mr. Mansfield comes under all these categories. Moreover, Frances has put on war-paint for his benefit, and we never poach on one another's preserves; so my smile is of the sketchiest, and I slip past him and join Sir Joseph on the hearthrug, leaving Frances to give Loamshire a character if so it seemeth good to her.

'Delightful man,' murmurs Sir Joseph *sotto voce*, 'and most successful. His business ability is something remarkable; and he is now retiring to enjoy the immense fortune accumulated by his talents and energy.'

Miss Fenton is glowering savagely from her deserted sofa; and in her wrathful glance she includes even her filched prey, who is being sweetly assured by Frances that the Loamshire people are very cheery, and that he will like them oh! so much; implying with clear uplifted eyes that they will like him oh! so much.

In spite of the delicate flattery she is administering so prettily, and which must be welcome to his masculine heart, he turns again to me.

'Do you remember that afternoon last January when the hounds ran from Billington to Queen's Gorse and the huntsman

gave you the brush, Miss Nugent? The master and all the field, with the exception of yourself and three men, were thrown out.'

'Because they followed some young hounds at the start? Yes, I remember,' I answer eagerly, forgetting the speaker in the sudden memories he has called up. 'What made you think of it? Were you there?'

Paton, the butler, announces dinner. By the way, the Yarboroughs are fully aware that they entertain an angel in Paton, and constantly inform their friends of the interesting fact.

Sir Joseph marches off with Frances, evidently ignoring my claims of seniority on the ground that her conversation will be more digestive, and waves Mr. Mansfield to me.

As I take his arm perforce, he bends a great deal nearer than I should wish, and, in a tone much too affectionate, murmurs, 'I rode at your side the whole way, and your face has haunted me ever since—though perhaps you have never even given me a second thought!'

'I am not aware of having bestowed a first thought upon you, Mr. Mansfield, much less a second. I do not remember that I have ever seen you before,' I answer angrily.

Jacquetta is close behind me, in animated converse with an elderly clergyman who I presently find is the Vicar, and when we reach the dining-room I make straight for her elbow, fully determined to discuss affairs parochial, with their leave or without their leave.

My intentions are momentarily frustrated by considerable difficulty in picking up the thread of their discourse.

'Half-a-dozen fowls?' says the Vicar interrogatively. He is a cadaverous-looking mortal, with blinking eyes and red whiskers.

Jacquetta shakes her head.

'They never touch poultry, if they have the chance of anything else,' she replies decisively. 'The year before last I gave them two Norfolk turkeys, and they all declared they were "poor eating."'

'Yes; butcher's meat is what their soul loveth,' agrees the Vicar dolefully; 'and small blame to them, poor things.'

'You are talking of a dinner for poor people?' I break in hastily, for Mr. Mansfield has freed himself from Eva Fenton, who is loudly clamouring for notice on his other side, and is beginning some remark to me.

'Yes; my old people's dinner,' says Jacquetta. 'It is coming

off next week. The Vicar was suggesting poultry for them, but I find they won't touch game, much less fowls, on these occasions.'

'How funny! I could live on game,' I declare with deepest interest, turning well round to Jacquetta and literally presenting a cold shoulder to Mr. Mansfield. Frances is shooting soft glances at him, judiciously utilising the brief moments during which Sir Joseph bestows undivided attention upon the soup; while Miss Hilda Davis just opposite is tenderly endeavouring to extract a smile.

'You had heaps of game at Billington,' says Mr. Mansfield, addressing my back. 'And how pretty the coverts are!'

'Very,' I reply laconically, leaning forward to catch some valuable remark the Vicar is making about a loin of mutton.

'They are very fond of a saddle,' Jacquetta replies doubtfully.

I wish they would talk about something else. Joints are so puzzling. Yet, after all, I may strike in on the very strength of my ignorance.

'How wise you are about loins and saddles, Jacquetta!' I exclaim hurriedly. 'I have been keeping house for the last two years, and I declare I don't know which is which.'

But Jacquetta takes this somewhat amiss.

'I suppose you mean that you had a French *chef*,' she says huffily; 'but many gentlemen like a slice from a joint.'

We are eight at dinner: Jacquetta and the Vicar, Sir Joseph and Frances, Mr. Mansfield and I, while the other two girls are manless.

In a short interval between the entrées and Frances' wiles Sir Joseph casts his lordly eye around. Apparently things are not going to his satisfaction.

Eva Fenton is volubly assuring Mr. Mansfield that the tandem he drove down from town some ten days ago has been the talk of the village ever since, and I, feeling that she has him in hand for five minutes good, am tranquilly meditating.

'Ahem! Mansfield, have you compared notes with Miss Nugent about your common friends in Loamshire? I think you will find, my dear Esmé, that Mr. Mansfield is intimately acquainted with the neighbourhood of Billington. Now, my dear Eva, don't pass that entrée; take my word for it, you young ladies who play tennis all day long ought to eat a good dinner to keep your strength up.'

His diplomacy is infantine in its candour, but at least it

compels me to turn round and ask Mr. Mansfield with a smile where he used to stay in Loamshire; not even for the pleasure of snubbing him must I vex my host.

'At the Rolands'. (Yes, I thought so; very second-rate people.)

'Really? Then you know the village of Billington well, I suppose?'

'Very well indeed. Pretty place,' says Mr. Mansfield, 'and nice people the Rolands. Don't you think so?'

'Well, I scarcely knew them to speak to,' I say hesitatingly; then with mendacious politeness, for fear of appearing to turn up my nose at Sir Joseph's friends' friends, 'but they *looked* very nice. Mrs. Roland is such a pretty little thing.'

'You scarcely knew them to speak to!' repeats Mr. Mansfield in surprise. 'Why they told me you were most intimate. That explains perhaps why I never could get them to introduce me to you. I went down there twice on purpose.'

And again I turn away in anger.

This broadly hinted admiration savours strongly of the recorded conversations of 'Arry and 'Arriet.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### DESERTED.

'EXACTLY one month since we came here,' says Frances, mournfully gazing into the fire; 'and oh, doesn't it seem time to pack up our traps and go home again?'

It is a chilly October evening, and Frances and I are indulging in the luxury of a quiet chat over my bedroom fire—an unwonted luxury, for Jacquetta is sociably inclined and likes to have us always with her. When we first came here we used to slip away for an hour's freedom and rest before dressing for dinner; but Jacquetta always asked us so fussily and pointedly what we had been doing with ourselves, that we find it more expedient now to remain in the bosom of the family until the dressing gong gives the lawful signal for retreat. This evening, however, she is peacefully and happily engaged in taking a guitar lesson, postponed from the morning when her Girls' Friendly Society accounts engrossed her. Jacquetta is a person of widely varied tastes; in the twinkling of an eye, and with the same unconscious courage, she will attack a

new musical instrument, a mothers' meeting, a portrait in oils, or the Hungarian polka.

'Home!' I echo dismally. 'Why it seems almost strange to me that we ever had a home of our own. I feel as if I had lived here for years, assuring Sir Joseph that no such Colossus as he ever bestrode the world.'

'I wish you would assure him a little more regularly then,' returns Frances pettishly. 'You are so intermittent, now and then you say something that puts him in a good temper; but when he comes fishing around for more, you gaze at him vacantly with a lack-lustre expression that shows your thoughts are miles away; and it takes me half an hour to soothe him down again.'

'He is so very voracious,' I sigh. Then, with a repentant qualm, 'After all, if he expects a lot of admiration he is quite willing it should be mutual. He goes about telling everyone how beautiful we are.'

'Yes, and how generous he is to us. We are a perfect wind-fall to him. He waves his hand towards us. "Just look at them—charming girls! So distinguished, so well-bred, accustomed to the very first society! And but for my benevolence where would they be?—ah, where?"'

'Well, and if he does it is Gospel truth,' I return stoutly, arguing with myself as much as with Frances. 'Has anyone else manifested the slightest desire for our company? It does seem strange to me sometimes that no one has made any effort to find out what has become of us.'

'Not in the least,' says Frances philosophically. 'There is nothing more to be got out of us, and why should people trouble themselves? They will only lodge and feast him who will lodge and feast them in return.'

Silence for a while. Opal-coloured flames shoot and crackle from the wood billets in the fireplace; Jacquetta uses a cunning combination of coal and wood cut from old ships which makes the cheeriest and most variegated of fires. As far as our creature comforts are concerned we have in no wise suffered from our change. We eat, we drink, we rise up, and lie down quite as luxuriously at Riverdale Place as at Billington, with only the difference that it is by kind charity of Sir Joseph Yarborough and not by right.

'I do wonder that we have heard nothing from Mr. Vaudrey,' I say slowly, the bitterest of all the bitter thoughts which have been my hourly companions finding its way into words at last.



Frances glances sharply at me.

‘So do not I,’ she says; ‘he inherits, as might be expected, a commercial mind.’

‘And yet, how is he to know where we are?’ I continue, unheeding her gibe, and going once more over the ground I have gone over to myself a hundred times, by day and by night, eating, drinking, sleeping, and waking.

‘When I wrote to put off the shooting party on the 1st we did not know where we were going.’

‘He knows where we are,’ remarks my sister oracularly.

‘What makes you say that, Frances?’

‘I may as well tell you now,’ she answers calmly, after a minute’s consideration and reaching out her hand for a Japanese fan to shield her fair skin from the dancing flames. ‘I wrote and asked Mrs. Stuart to let him know before we left Billington.’

‘Frances! What made you do that?’ I exclaim, shame and astonishment chasing each other through my mind.

‘I thought he would come after you, and I thought under the altered circumstances you could not do better than accept him. In both of these conjectures I am not ashamed to confess myself mistaken,’ smoothing out the bow of ribbon on the handle of the fan and gazing at me with cool effrontery.

‘How dared you without saying anything to me? And what was the use? He had left Mrs. Stuart’s. And what did you write to her? Tell me exactly.’

‘Let me see,’ begins Frances slowly; something like this:—  
“Dear Mrs. Stuart,—In packing up our books just now I came across two which Mr. Vaudrey lent us. As I do not remember his address, will you be so very kind as to let him know ours, which I will write on the opposite page? And then he can have his books by asking for them and telling me where to send them. I am ashamed to trouble you, but I do not see what else I can do. We are terribly busy getting our possessions together, and leave here to-morrow. Yours affectionately, Frances Nugent.” ‘I got a line from her by return post, saying that she had sent on my letter, which explained itself, to Mr. Vaudrey.’

I put my hands in front of my burning face; even from Frances I would like to hide its mortification.

‘And he has made no sign!’

‘Of course that is the annoying part of it,’ says Frances. ‘You would have been delighted if he had come rushing down here, and



would have quite forgiven me my little stratagem—which by the way is perfectly admissible, and even respectable. I did not know his address, and what was I to do with his books?’

‘The books were lent to me, and I had written a note about the pheasant shooting to his father’s house only a few days before,’ I cry furiously.

‘Dear me!’ coughs Frances. ‘Had you really now? How could I tell that? Well, as I said before, it is my want of success which constitutes my crime.’

I jump up and pace the room, consuming my wrath. I do not know for the moment whether I am most angry with Allan Vaudrey or with Frances. He must be a thorough-paced flirt; but if it were not for her I should at least have nothing to be ashamed of.

Frances rises and carefully shakes down the skirt of her gown; with thrifty forethought it has been tucked back from the scorching flames, disclosing thereby a smart petticoat and a pair of tiny high-heeled shoes with enormous buckles.

‘I have lots more to say,’ she remarks placidly, ‘but the moment is not a propitious one. When you have quite recovered from this little worry, I should like to point out the path of duty and show you how immensely to be preferred in every way is the bird at present in hand.’

And without waiting for the objurgations which are obviously impending, she slips into her own room and softly closes the door.

‘This little worry,’ as Frances delicately calls it, fills my cup of woe to the brim.

Almost more than I knew I have been counting on Allan Vaudrey, assuring myself that he would soon hunt up our address, and find some excuse for appearing at Riverdale.

When Sir Joseph has been more insufferably patronising than usual, or Jacquetta has more convincingly pointed out the change in my position, I have been able to wreath my face in smiles not all false; if they have been started by effort of will and somewhat vinegary at first, the thought that a deliverer will come ere long has broadened them into very tolerable imitations of Frances’ sunny beams.

I have escaped from them all at odd moments, and have solaced myself with fond recollections of the laughing grey eyes, of the kind face, of the strong shoulders which I would fain make my bulwark from all troubles.

I have congratulated myself upon the fact that I had really

made up my mind to accept him before my fall in the world, and had even given Frances so to understand. I have wondered much what his father will say about it; whether he will grumble at my pauperism: after all I am a Nugent, though I am afraid some of these *nouveaux riches* care horribly little for a long pedigree and much prefer allying their pounds sterling to other pounds sterling; how and where he will start us in life. Somehow this last item does not agitate me as much as it did once. I do not deny that I should be delighted, nay overjoyed, to have plenty of money and to live where I could rejoin my old set and take up my old life; but it is not the first consideration now. I have felt so lonely and so chilled lately that a home with Allan Vaudrey *anywhere* presents itself as the cosiest of refuges to my mind's eye. I long, as I never did in my life before, for love. All that I had of affection seems to have slipped away from me with my other possessions, even that of Frances' herself, she being too absorbed in 'paying her way,' as she calls it, with nods, and becks, and smiling attentions, to have even a loving word or caress for me. Indeed in a thousand little ways she makes me feel that there would be more room for her here were I elsewhere.

Not that I rival her in the good graces of any member of the household, far from it; she has distanced me in an easy canter. It is 'Frances, my dearest girl,' from Sir Joseph, 'Francie, Francie,' from Jacquetta, and 'Frances' from everyone else from morning to night; whilst they look at me askance with doubtful glances, are very polite to me, and very much afraid of what I may think. And yet, Heaven knows, I would fain think no hard things of them. Their ways truly are not my ways; yet many a time when I have pettishly betrayed how some vulgar remark has jarred upon me, I have repented afterwards in sackcloth and ashes, and reminded myself with bitter reproaches of their kind-hearted hospitality and of all I owe to them. I long to repay my indebtedness by all means in my power; but it is not in my power to talk, to snigger, in fact (not to put too fine a point upon it) to vulgarise myself to their level.

Now Frances has no such high-flying notions. As she modestly remarks, she will back herself to hold a candle to the devil against anyone; and by a giggle here, a slang phrase there, now a broad expression, and then a facetious poke, she has instilled into them all, that never before has her sympathetic soul found surroundings so congenial.

(To be continued.)

*MACBETH.*

WELL-WORN as the theme may be, there still breathes an indefinable freshness over this most popular play—just as its familiar title sends a new thrill of expectation through the playgoer every time it is placed on the door of a theatre. ‘Age cannot wither nor custom stale’ its ‘infinite variety;’ and in spite of the volumes that have been written on the subject, something, if not actually new, yet strangely attractive, may be gained in the perusal of its pages every day we read them. It is an inexhaustible mine where the deeper we delve the richer the veins of treasure, and yet we may fail to pluck out the heart of its mystery. In the first place a tale of murder will always have a lurid fascination of its own, and more especially when a murderess is concerned; empires may totter, ministries fall, and convulsive throes of nature or man take place in distant parts of the globe, but will fail altogether to distract our attention from some murder committed in our midst. This may be morbid, but it is human nature.

But apart from this, the figures of the Macbeths stand out in such grand proportions from the dark background of the canvas, that they irresistibly engross our attention, while dwarfing the secondary characters of the drama to insignificance, and we may well conclude that the masterhand worked upon their detailed characters, their depths of colour and contrast, as a labour of love. He was not this time chronicling history, but simply evolving ‘The Tragedy of Macbeth’ authorised by tradition, which served as a corner-stone; and vivifying to our eyes a moral fall of man and woman which is as stately in grandeur of language, and far more awe-inspiring because it ‘touches us nearer,’ than the fall of the angels in Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost.’ Our sympathies are closer because they are stirred with the true echoes of that ‘still sad music of humanity.’

And there is yet another charm that allures our imagination. It is the instrumentality of spiritual agencies which are not only acknowledged but daringly brought before us. Doubtless it was the record of these supernatural incidents and influences that marked the story so forcibly in the page of tradition, that stamped

the story of Macbeth as one to be remembered out of the wearisome record of ruthless butcheries and foul assassinations that form the chief features of early Scottish history. We may scoff at the belief in spirits and witches, but next, if not before, a tale of murder, a ghost story is what will attract the greatest audience or number of readers. Even in our own matter-of-fact days the play which has had the greatest success is one of direct spiritual agency; one that is so far akin to Macbeth that it presents to us the fall of man and woman through the visible presence of the devil and his ministers—Faust and Marguerite. Man is little changed in nature; in spite of all arguments of scientist, atheist, materialist, he cannot shake off the secret instinct of a world beyond his ken, whose denizens have a direct interest, and move, though invisibly, in close contact with our own lives.

Now, to have made Macbeth and his wife commit a murder simply of their own freewill and brutal passions would have repelled us from them, but we see them falling weakly, wickedly it may be, but yet under the immediate subtle influence of devils. In like manner we should abhor Faust did we not pity him as the victim of satanic malice. It is only when under the power of demons, though she imagine she has invoked them as her slaves, that Lady Macbeth is devilish. The 'weird sisters of Destinie' open the drama to show us under whose secret direction the plot is to be. The culminating interest is not the foul deeds of two naturally wicked criminals, but the deadly fall of two souls made for loftier purposes, grander aims, awfully misdirected by the crafts of the Devil. This is the plot in 'Macbeth'—it is the same in 'Faust.'

But before going further into the drama itself, let us take up hand in hand with it the real historical interest involved too—namely, the circumstances and motives of its production; the light that it throws upon that eternal puzzle, the life of Shakespeare. We are not of those who decline to trace the man in his works; he is undoubtedly more to be found in them than perhaps any other author, for he wrote from his heart; he wove in the passing thoughts of his mind, and he has left us a proof of that, when we so often find the same thoughts running through passages in the plays as we come across in those undisguised reflections of his inner feeling, which he wrote for friends and not for the public, the Sonnets. With the aid of contemporary facts and

data, which serve as signposts along his obscure way of life, we may glean much of his leanings, moods, and feelings, in fact realise much of that inner life which was so content to veil its greatness behind the drop-scene of the Globe playhouse.

There is a question of great interest involved in fixing the date of *Macbeth*, viz., whether Shakspeare ever went to Scotland or not. Mr. Knight is almost alone in supporting one of these theories, his only proof being the record of 'Laurence Fletcher, comediane to His Majesty,' having received the freedom of the city of Aberdeen in October 1601, which same Laurence Fletcher heads the list of the players to whom the royal license was given so soon after King James's arrival in London, 1603, Shakspeare's name being placed second. Now that appears to be the very reason for Shakspeare's absence at Aberdeen, for assuredly he would have been selected for the high honour before Fletcher, whose name does not occur among the players' list of Shakspeare's company. That Fletcher from his previous connection with King James was chiefly instrumental in obtaining the license we may well believe, and was very welcome on that account to the Globe company; but such a play-loving king must have heard of Shakspeare's reputation as a dramatist and manager in great favour at his cousin's court, and had Shakspeare gone to Scotland he would have been more highly honoured than Laurence Fletcher, whom we only know as a 'fellow-actor,' and who never wrote a line, at least of any permanent value.

But the real stumbling-block in the way of the Scotch tour is the delay in giving effect to these supposed Scotch gleanings. '*Macbeth*' is not mentioned as publicly performed till 1610, whilst we hear of '*Hamlet*,' '*Othello*,' '*Measure for Measure*,' as acted before King James in 1603-4. Why, with this exciting incentive of the accession of a Scotch king, directly descended from Banquo, was Shakspeare so late in the day in adding his pæan of welcome? Ben Jonson and others devised masques and fulsome addresses, almost amounting to profanity in their extravagance of flattery, during the long triumphal progresses of the new king; but Shakspeare is silent, though specially sent for to entertain the king at Wilton and Hampton Court. We know he performed six pieces at the former, and yet, with such a keen eye to business as he undoubtedly had, he refrains from producing the pointed compliments in the subject of '*Macbeth*,' and the introduction of '*witches*' before the royal author of '*Dæmonologia*.' On the contrary, he brings

before him the stern rebuke of Hamlet against the new-fashioned heavy drinking prevalent at court, and boldly says—

Let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,  
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,  
Where thrift may follow fawning.

If any other proof were wanting of his unrecorded Scotch tour, we can almost trace out an *alibi*. For in July 1601 his father died at Stratford, and we may rest certain that such a dutiful and faithful son would not be absent from his obsequies, he who took so much thought of having the 'passing bell' rung for his brother Gilbert. Then there would be business affairs to settle, and the ever increasing Stratford investments to occupy him, and in the following Christmas revels he is bringing out 'Twelfth Night' before Queen Elizabeth, so there is scarce time for a Scottish trip in the interim, before the days of tourist tickets or even of stage coaches. As we suspect, Stratford and its homely ties barred the way northwards; he could not resist spending the little spare time with his family, so long unavoidably separated from him during his London career. He considered himself a traveller, and revelled in mountain scenery—

Full many a glorious morning have I seen  
Flatter the mountain tops with sov'ran eye.

Yet these experiences may have been gained in Wales beside his favourite Milford. Had he been to Scotland he would have learned that Glamis was pronounced Glāmes, and Dunsinane Dunsinnan.

Though his company did go on tour throughout England and Wales, it was against their interest to do so; 'their profit and reputation' suffered. 'How chances it they travel?' inquires Hamlet of the tragedians of the city. Certainly a prolonged absence in Scotland would not have paid them in finance or repute. Though he lifts no eulogy of the late queen, before whom he had played so lately, possibly his loyal ardour was checked by the memory of Essex and his friend Pembroke's wrongs; at the same time Shakspeare raises no indecorous incense of adoration before the rising sun of James; others are before him even in catching up the subject of the Stuart descent from Banquo, and this is noteworthy because it brings the Macbeth tale to the front, and in all probability suggested it to Shakspeare, as Dr. Farmer and Malone have asserted. In 1605 King James makes his first



visit to Oxford, and is so bored to death with the classical addresses, ovations, plays, &c., that he falls to sleep and snores in the middle of them, but at one original masque he wakes up, and we read 'the kinge did very much applaude the conceit thereof.' At St. John's Gate there met him three students dressed as 'weird sisters,' representing the great Unionist principle which England has been so violently agitated to defend in our own time, viz., England, Scotland, and Ireland. These 'Sibylls' recited the following 'all hail,' both in Latin and English, for the benefit of the queen and Prince Charles :—

Fatidicas olim fama est cecinisse sorores  
Imperium sine finetuae, rex inclute, stirpis.  
Banquonem agnovit generosa Loquabria<sup>1</sup> Thanum;  
Nec tibi, Banquo, tuis sed sceptrā nepotibus illā  
Immortalibus, immortalia, vaticinatæ;  
In saltum, ut lateas, dum Banquo recedis ab aulā;  
Tres eadem pariter canimus tibi fata tuisque,  
Dum, spectande tuis, e saltu accedis ad urbem;  
Teque salutamus: Salve! cui Scotia servit.

Dr. Gwynne annexed these lines to his 'Vertumnus Tragedy,' which was performed at the same time.

We read in A. Nixon's 'Oxford Triumph,' of 'three little boyes, drest like three nymphes, coming forth of a castle made all of ivie,' and in Holinshed the words 'nymphes or feeries' are used in describing the weird sisters who met Macbeth.

Now where was Shakspeare? Why was he not to the fore with his Scotch experiences of 1601? We turn to our signpost of known data, and find he was as usual at Stratford in the July of 1605, completing his large purchase of the lease of a moiety of the town tithes. Now Oxford was one of his halting places in his numerous journeys to and fro, where he put up with his good friends the Davenants at the Crown, and we learn that on his return route to town in October of that year he gave several performances before the mayor and corporation of that town. Being well known and very popular, he would have heard of all the great doings in August, and how much the king, queen, and young Prince Charles, just arrived from the ancient royal Scotch city of Dunfermline, were pleased with the Masque of the three Sibylls, and allusions to their illustrious progenitor Banquo,<sup>2</sup> which would

<sup>1</sup> Lochaber.

<sup>2</sup> The descendants of Fleance, Banquo's son, who fled to Wales, returned to Scotland and became Lord Stewards (hence Stuarts) of Scotland.



have sent him to Holinshed's 'Chronicles,' whence the idea had evidently been taken. There he would have found the groundwork for his plot. And on this foundation we propose to consider how skilfully he built up the immortal characters, Lord and Lady Macbeth. Shortly afterwards he showed his gratitude to the king for past favours by producing it, possibly in the following March, before the court, on which occasion, doubtless, he received the friendly letter indited in the sovereign's own hand, of which, alas, no record has been kept; it is irretrievably lost, together with all the invaluable manuscripts of Shakspeare which have so unaccountably disappeared.

There is evidence perhaps of this, as well as of Hamlet, being first played before the sovereign, by the marked introduction of 'Long live the king!' and 'God save the king!' respectively in the opening scenes by Bernardo and the Thane of Rosse. Shakspeare, too, has certainly alluded, with a graceful apology, to King James's hatred of crowds and shunning of the public gaze, in the speech of Duncan's,

The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love,

as he has done more pointedly in 'Measure for Measure,' which was produced earlier in King James's reign, where the Duke observes,

I'll privily away. I love the people,  
But do not like to stage me to their eyes  
Though it do well. I do not relish well  
Their loud applause and Aves vehement.

It was at this famous Oxford reception that King James learned our 'Aves vehement,' viz., to clap his hands, which at first he failed to understand.

So much for the origin of the play, though it is strange that we have no mention of its public performance till Dr. Simon Forman's graphic account of 1610. It is pleasant to think, however, that it may have been the last produced under Shakspeare's own direct management, and that Duncan may have been the last 'kingly part'—so well fitted to him—for which he may have been cast, for in 1608 we have mention of him, 'till of late an actor.' Malone thinks the allusions of the garrulous porter to the 'equivocator who could swear in both scales, against either, yet could not equivocate to heaven,' was a direct reference to Father Garnet's 'Doctrine of

Equivocation,' and to the late dearth 'of the farmer who hanged himself in expectation of plenty,' both tending to establish 1606 as the date of its production. Very probably the 'local hits' were crammed into this one speech—the only clowning in the piece—the 'little fat,' in actor's parlance, put in for Kempe's benefit, as well as to relieve the audience from the terrible tension of the murder scenes.

Thus we see him pondering how to gracefully display his gratitude to the king, at whose coronation he walked in the procession as one of His Majesty's servants, and with a grand theme at his hand, himself as great a believer in witchcraft and spirits as the king.

Stratford may have been as well versed in the lore of demonology as Aberdeen, and from the influx of Scottish gentry Shakspeare would have picked up more. But, beyond this, what thoroughly engaged his interest in the work is its domestic aspect. Wonderfully attractive to him were the incidents and passions of middle-aged and married couples, such as Leontes and Hermione, Othello and Desdemona, and the Macbeth; after the consummation of their loves, after the early freshness of youth had worn off, and the sudden lightning of love like Romeo's had matured into deeper affection or more terribly stirred jealousies. We seem to mark the influence of his own early marriage at eighteen, which appears at times to have weighted his mind with a premature sense of old age. Domestic in all his habits and inclinations Shakspeare undoubtedly was; the word 'home' had a witchery which was irresistible to him, and anchored him to the 'haven where he would be,' in spite of the contamination of 'the Bohemianism' that surrounded him in London during his enforced absence from the 'home' of his youth and age. The loves of husband and wife are always sacred to him; even the wanton Cleopatra realises that at length:—

Husband, I come;

Now to that name my courage prove my title!

Whatever may have been his errors, his failings, his flirtations with Mistress Fitton or anyone else, they are not inconsistent with that true basis of domestic affection which he ever reiterates, and illustrated nobly himself by his calm retirement at the last amid his family. He must have been a domestic man in the best sense of the word who penned that exquisite description of the careful housewife in Sonnet cxliii.:

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch  
 One of her feather'd creatures broke away,  
 Sets down her babe, and makes all swift despatch  
 In pursuit of the thing she would have stay,  
 Whiles her neglected child holds her in chase, &c.

This is not an inappropriate digression from the drama whose one redeeming touch is domestic love, where Shakspeare seems to have tried how far he could plunge a devoted couple into the basest of crimes without withdrawing, if not our secret sympathies, at least our pity for them; and the more we look into the slight basis on which he built that most powerfully finished of all his feminine characters, the more are we struck with his earnest reverence and belief in the nobility inherent in a true wife. Lady Macbeth has the grandest entrance, the most appalling exit, and creates the most forcible impression in the fewest lines of any of his first-class characters.

And what was the Lady Macbeth of Holinshed's 'Chronicles'? We only learn that 'speciallie his wife lay sore upon him to obey the thing, as she was verie ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of queene.'

Now mark how that selfish ambition is nobly turned into one devoted thought to have *her husband's* brows 'crowned withal,'

Which shall to all our days and nights to come  
 Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

We learn nothing more of that nameless wife. Her origin and descent are not told us, nor does she appear again to have been worth mentioning during the dozen years of Macbeth's noted reign, but in the quaint old 'Buik of the Chronicles of Scotland' her character is drawn in more detail. She is described as an innate 'wicked woman,' and makes a long speech to stir up her husband, profanely urging the sophistry that it was right in the sight of God.

So this 'wicket wyfe' vanishes from the scene of traditional history, but to rise again in the form of that finest creation, Lady Macbeth, who enters reading a letter, alone! Yet while ennobling the character of this 'wicket wyfe,' Shakspeare has boldly ventured to deepen her crime; for it appears that the real Macbeth, though roused to the 'sticking place' by his wife, was quite capable of taking the matter in hand himself, and never thought of leaving the plot to be laid by his wife, but sought out a quarrel himself. He was only asserting his fancied rights as first cousin to the king,

fearing to be superseded by the creation of Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland; and, aided by Banquo and his friends, slew King Duncan in open fight, the king not being the old man of Shakspeare, but of his own standing more or less, both being sons of the two daughters (Beatrice and Rooda) of the late King Malcolm II.

Heinous as this was, it was not so bad as the cold-blooded murder of an old man in his bed, which is an incident derived from King Duff's assassination by Donwald and his wife. But yet Lady Macbeth holds us enthralled by the inherent grandeur of one with a noble force of character and determination of will, and all the while retaining enough of that weakness of woman, which she vainly strives to shake from her, to keep our sympathies to the end.

In Macbeth, on the contrary, Shakspeare has made a clean sweep of the redeeming points of the real Thane's character, viz., the ten years of beneficent sway that partly atoned for his crime; and has lowered him irretrievably by the contemptible irresolution and craven feebleness of purpose he exhibits, though he has won our pity even for him by softening down the one trait of tigerish ferocity and delight in cruelty that marred the brilliant career of the real Macbeth. He is especially characterised to us as being 'too full o' the milk o' human kindness,' and even the mad butcheries he is driven to at the last are the results more of a devil-possessed than the cruel deeds of a sane man. Even they, too, are toned down, for he is not actually present at the slaughter of the Macduff family as the Thane of history was.

Enter Lady Macbeth *alone*, reading a letter from her lord, the whole cue to understanding her is given at once. She is a lonely woman with one devotion, her lord. Desdemona has Emilia as her faithful confidante; Hero, Beatrice; Hermione, Paulina; Rosalind, Celia; but Lady Macbeth watches alone for the coming of her lord. She could have had but little of his company during their previous married life; he was always at work fighting his cousin's battles against the Danes, or putting down rebels in the West for his sworn friend and able seconder Banquo, Thane of Lochaber. He seems to have carved for himself a great name during his father Sinel's lifetime, for having no local ties of thaneship, as his father held Glamis, he sought fame far and near, and was in immense request during the continual warfare under the too mild rule of Duncan. He stands forth as the stout supporter of the throne, the patriotic defender of his country against the

piratical Sweno's incursions, and the true friend to his fellow-general Banquo. All this heroic career was marred as we are told by the stain of cruelty, inherited from his grandfather Malcolm II., who was slain by secret murderers, curiously enough, under Sinel's roof at Glamis where he had sought protection. Whether it was this stain upon Sinel's hospitality or from his having incurred the odium of Malcolm's ill-deeds, we know not, but he appears to have been quite a nonentity in those stirring times, and estranged from his heroic son, who hears of his death without emotion of any kind, but for the pride of being Thane of Glamis, which his wife shares with him. She, too, has had an aged father, some hoary-headed chieftain who had survived the turbulent strife of factions, and had lived to die in his bed with his silvery hairs wept over by his only daughter. Gladly she would have welcomed the arrival, on one of his marches, of the gallant Macbeth, 'Bellona's bridegroom,' and we may well suppose that the deep love for 'his dearest chuck' of after life was quickly kindled at the first meeting with that lithe, dark, keen-eyed, little solitary offshoot of a noble family, and would have found responsive echo in her breast, when that reserved haughtiness that distinguished her was broken through; for note the strained artificial tone of her speeches of formal courtesy, as if she found it a difficulty to unbend. This is why she never makes friends, though she excites respect and admiration. Perhaps their marriage was delayed till she had closed her father's eyes in peace, and Macbeth could spare a breathing space between his incessant conflicts. But their love is deepened by absence, for she shows us she knows well his failings, and has well scanned his character, and that quick insight into his weaknesses must have mingled a tinge of contempt had he been constantly with her, but when away she fixes her lonely thoughts on him—

The idea of '*his*' life shall sweetly creep  
Into '*her*' study of imagination;

and she pictures him the perfect hero of her youth. He writes his inmost thoughts, and she has learnt to read between the lines; she knows—

What thou wouldst highly  
That wouldst thou holily—wouldst not play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win.

Yet he is still her one ideal, her one devotion; she will risk all for his sake; those letters of his are the one solace to her solitude;

she ponders them in her heart alone. The bond of union between them has been consummated by that lost babe, so early taken from her. 'She has given suck,' and knows 'how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks us!' A touching revelation of the true woman's tenderness at the bottom of that determined will, that imperious reserve. She is no fiend! she has been a mother, and in the bitterness of that wrench to their united hopes, that irrevocable loss of the son, or daughter perhaps, as implied by Macbeth's subsequent passionate exclamation—

Bring forth men children only,  
For thy undaunted mettle should conceive  
Nothing but males—

that child is taken from her and she is once more alone. Her devotion is simply strengthened towards him on whom she felt her whole ambition and hopes were centred; none the less was she proud of him because she felt she could mould him to her 'manlier' spirit and infuse him with her dominating will. She too would have known as 'great a flow of the milk of human kindness'—but she has no children: and the natural outlet of maternal love in that of her babes having been denied to her, her inborn tenderness has dried up, and in her despair, her reckless repudiation of natural instincts, she bids the fiends

Come to her woman's breasts  
And take her milk for gall!

We shudder at but do not loathe her; rather pity is kindled the more, for we see by the earnestness of her despair how deeply she could have loved. That one hope of children is common to them both. Macbeth clings, perchance with reason, to another fulfilment to replace the lost one; he cannot believe in 'no son of his succeeding.' How ardently would he, too, have watched over that long-looked-for offspring! How fondly comes across him that beautiful imagery of

Pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast.

But he has no children! 'neither shall he leave anie issue behind him to succeed in his place,' as the sisters of Destinie forewarned him. Both hearts are terribly hardened, embittered by that cruel disappointment, making their souls ready swept and garnished for the agencies of those evil spirits.

At her first entry, 'alone,' Lady Macbeth unravels her mind



at once; she broods not like her husband, poisoning the good and evil, hesitating, trying to conclude only to conclude to do nothing, but leave it to chance, yet never shaking himself free of what he knows is evil. No; she decides at once—

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be  
What thou art promised;

and no sooner has she weighed the weakness of her lord with her resolve to give what he would never wrest himself, than the opportunity presents itself in that attendant's excited announcement—

The King comes here to-night!

and she is almost surprised into revealing her hidden intent,

Thou'rt mad to say it;

then instantly controlling her feelings, pretends to doubt the truth, and on its being confirmed calmly gives orders for the tending of the well-omened messenger. There is a tremendous dramatic force in that abrupt break in her soliloquy, which gives point also to the magnificent outburst that follows, that most awful invocation to the spirits of evil who seem so ready to play into her hands. All her pent-up emotions swell to the highest flights of imaginative language, and the practical, strong-minded woman is 'for once transported beyond the ignorant present.' Knowing her physical weaknesses, as she would term those sensitive natural feelings, she appeals to the supernatural powers in that diabolical prayer to unsex her; till she is again fitly interrupted by Macbeth with that strange mixture of tender affection and guilty purpose—

My dearest love,

Duncan comes here to-night.

That tells all; she reads his face like a book; a weak man tells his tale without speech. What need of more? Their once innocent loves, that strong devotion to each other, is to prove their damnation; to be cemented in blood; and we breathlessly watch them go hand in hand down 'the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.' He has yielded to the promptings of the devil's undisguised semi-earthly agents: she has appealed to the powers of hell to strengthen, to harden her very nature, just as in contrast to her diabolical prayer Banquo addresses his

Merciful powers,

Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that Nature  
Gives way to in repose.



Good and evil are at work throughout this crisis; the very elements are stirred in that night of horror.

The obscure bird clamour'd the livelong night.  
Some say the earth was feverous and did shake,

not so much at the death of the good Duncan as at the moral fall of 'one who was once thought honest; you have loved him well,' as we are told by Malcolm's speech to Macduff afterwards—of one who had every inclination to do right, a sense of honour and pity, yet no strength to resist or pray for resistance, like Banquo.

Lady Macbeth's prayer is at once answered; she is strengthened for the time, and that with the aid, too, of that 'invisible spirit of wine,' of which Cassio so aptly says—'If thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!' She effects her full purpose and instils her firm resolve into her shrinking mate, though it is only by taunting his courage—a sharp spur to quicken his intents—that she succeeds in goading him to the 'sticking place'; she has the courage, the vigour of thought and hand to execute the deed given to her by the powers of darkness, till she has damned irretrievably herself and husband, and then *she faints!* The woman asserts herself again, while the juggling fiends who have assisted leave her to her weakness; and some mocking, hideous laughter, like that in the Walpurgis Night revels in 'Faust,' celebrates the triumph of evil round the uncanny circle of a hellish caldron in some wild glen of the Highland fastnesses. She faints! The subtle spell is over; the overstrained nerves give way. The strong-minded woman who could jest as she 'gilded the faces of the grooms withal'—she faints at the mere account of her own deed, and is borne off, while Banquo unconsciously points a moral at her collapse in the double-edged speech—

And when we have our naked frailties hid  
That suffer in exposure.

She revives from that faint an altered woman. Where she fondly hoped to rule, her influence is gone—she finds herself a sharer in those visions of a tell-tale conscience,

those terrible dreams  
Which shake us nightly.

She quietly, deliberately, accepted the possibilities of failure in that firm, calm response to the whispered fear—

*M.* If we should fail,—

*Lady M.*

We fail !<sup>1</sup>

But, &c., &c.

She thought to have made failure impossible ; she wakes from that faint to learn its reality.

In act iii. scene 2, when alone she awaits her husband, she lets us into the secret of failure by that sad confession which escapes from her lips :

Naught's had, all's spent,

Where our desire is got without content.

The exact description of her state of mind, her despairing discovery, may be read in Sonnet cxxix. :

A bliss in proof, and proved a very woe ;

Before, a joy proposed—behind, a dream !

All this the world knows well ; yet none knows well

To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

This confession of Lady Macbeth is all the more striking as it comes after we have seen her in the full dignity of queen, courteously inviting Banquo to the great supper. Yet she is strangely unobtrusive, and submissive to her husband's wishes : she retires without a word, while he seems to be the directing spirit.

He plots now, and will only reveal his plots to her on their completion, while she becomes a tame, silent accessory to his atrocities. Yet that does not free her from the consciousness of guilt, as she acknowledges in her last terrible appearance. A woman of her quick understanding would have seen at once the mistake of Banquo's assassination. Though he has his strong suspicions of the crime, yet he is in no wise prepared to avenge Duncan ; he merely recognises the possible truth of prediction, and it is not his interest to disturb things as they are. In the history, we read Macbeth conciliated his nobles by feasts and favours, and ruined all by the murder of Banquo. There was a general acquiescence in his usurped rule and a respectful admiration for his queen. Lady Macbeth knows the falseness of the maxim—

Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill ;

yet she makes no attempt to deter her husband from his bloody purposes ; she seems to have lost all heart, and merely gives a half-suggested approval of his intentions, if she does not actually imply the immediate murder of Banquo and Fleance.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Siddons had three ways of saying it to convey a different meaning through laying the emphasis on '*We*,' or '*fail*,' or in carrying on to '*But*.' The most impressive was the one we have adopted,

Her influence over him is broken, but not their love—their mutual confidence. No, their secret guilt binds them in still closer union. It is the double task of not only keeping up a cheerful face o'er an aching heart herself, but also the strain of comforting her sinking mate, of watching every start of his lest he should betray himself, the vain endeavour to make him sleek o'er his rugged looks before his guests—it is this that breaks her down finally. She succeeds in calming the guests, in misleading their fears and inquiries, but the effort is too much; she can merely respond, when left together, to his 'What is the night?'

Almost at odds with morning which is which.

When she finds she cannot direct, she saves him from himself; while he urges her to give Banquo eminence, 'both in eye and tongue,' thereby awaking suspicion when the cause of his absence is known, she keeps reserved and silent, bidding him speak her welcomes to the guests; but when she has done her best and his false face has failed to hide the false heart below, she wearily, sadly gives in—the last ray of hope is gone, the night is almost at 'odds with morning which is which.' For them she knows there can be but one great eclipse of sun and moon, the last hope of driving off the impending storm has fled, there is no escape from the black cloud that hangs over their haunted lives. He is in blood steeped in too far, and even now scarcely recovered from the shock of Banquo's spectre, he can find no comfort but in fresh suspicions:

How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
At our great bidding?

This is no question of doubt, but an inquiry as to her opinion of Macduff's suspicious denial; but she has no advice, no counsel to give him—no, his counsellors are the weird sisters—she can only vaguely respond, 'Did'st thou send to him?' 'What's done is done,' and one crime more can make little difference. She can only now urge him to seek rest from these perpetual fears, as if he *could* sleep, as if the season of all natures could be his who has heard that awful doom pronounced, 'Macbeth shall sleep no more!' His rest is but to plan brutal slaughters—unnecessary murders to set all hearts against him, to accomplish Hecate's malicious purposes, and the wretched, weak, guilt-haunted man mocks himself and his wife saying, 'Come, we'll to sleep!' Fitting end to the scene of her last appearance save one, when she walks

with her eyes open but their sense shut, that one tremendous penance when Duncan is more than avenged, that makes us draw our breath and shudderingly turn from the spectacle of hopeless remorse, when with the forecast of an eternal gloom she realises that 'hell is murky,' the dread shadow upon her already which she vainly seeks to keep off; 'she has light continually by her,' ere she goes out 'once more' to bed, only to die heartbroken, haunted, and alone!

Macbeth shows himself a bungling villain, not a born one like Richard III. and Iago. He enters into an elaborate argument with the suborned murderers, urging the sophistry of their private wrongs as incitements to kill Banquo, and he has been arguing with them previously: compare that with Richard's ready method (act i. scene 3), short and to the point, no disguise:—

About your business straight,  
Go, go dispatch;

as the murderer there aptly observes, 'talkers are no good doers.' Richard's plans are laid out and dry, and he interferes no further with his agents, but Macbeth after carefully arranging every detail, the spot, 'the perfect spy o' the time,' sends a third murderer to make all sure, and the consequence is that the work is only half done and Fleance escapes. The introduction of that third murderer is one of those minute touches which show the careful finish of a master hand. The first two hirelings object to the addition; 'He needs not our mistrust,' they justly remonstrate, for the two would have each marked their man, but in the confusion of the light being struck out, the best half of the affair is left undone, the officious presence of a third stranger having ruffled their temper and rendered their blows badly aimed, and struck in a half-hearted way. There has been the highly improbable theory started of the third mysterious murderer having been the Thane himself disguised, but how could we then account for his eager inquiries in the banquet hall and vexation at learning the result? Besides, they surely would have recognised his voice. No, it is but thrown in to show the over-caution of 'thinking too precisely on the event.'

His other plotted assassination of Macduff, where for once he declares he will crown his thought with act by way of making 'assurance doubly sure,' as signally fails. Macduff has escaped, and the slaughter of his wife and children only serves to hasten

the catastrophe and the army of vengeance as well as swell its ranks.

It is a curious point to note Shakspeare's secret sympathy for brooders, of which of course Hamlet stands pre-eminent; he, like Macbeth, imagines he has forced himself to act at last.

O from this time forth,  
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth,

he exclaims, but nothing comes of it. Romeo is a brooder only stirred into too hasty action by ill-considered impulses, which must always be preceded by a long disquisition, though he does know how to make up his mind. Leontes broods over fancied evidence, till his jealousies amount to aberration of the intellect; and it is the brooding over his wrongs rather than the acts themselves that confirms Lear in his madness. We have evidence that Shakspeare himself was a brooder at times, and in his fits of depression could desire

this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;

that he would lament his 'motley' and yet would continue to wear it, and cling to his share in the theatrical wardrobe till his last years. Genius is liable more than the ordinary mortal to his moods of despondency, even after its greatest triumphs; the poet's eye is very prone to exaggerate the petty worries and crosses of life, just in proportion to its power of enhancing the beauties of nature or the glories of love. Thought is always busiest in solitude when nothing distracts, and it was the counteracting influence of a naturally buoyant and sociable temperament, combined with the variety of his employments and interests, that kept Shakspeare probably from lapsing into an inveterate brooder, yet it could not wholly dissipate the sad moments,

When in despite of Fortune and men's eyes  
I all alone beweepe my hapless fate.

Far more applicable are these lines to the state of Macbeth in the last two acts where he realised indeed that he was 'all alone.'

The devoted couple whom we have seen hand-in-hand during all the previous acts appear separately in the last two; not that there has been any estrangement between them, on the contrary enforced absence only brings them nearer in spirit. Lady Macbeth has had light by her continually 'ever since my lord went into

the field,' that she may even in her feverish sleep write to him vain messages of consolation, and he is so present to her vivid dreams that she talks to him as of old, watches his starts, his pale face, and stretches out her hand once more to lead him to their woful bed. Was ever a more heart-rending conception than that piteous last speech of this guilty, but too faithful wife?

To bed, to bed; there's knocking at the gate: come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed.

We cannot help being reminded by this scene of that pathetic description of the last days of Queen Elizabeth, another lonely woman dying with a troubled conscience, with finger on her lip to keep the secret of a seared heart to herself—she who had outlived all her favourites as well as the affection of her subjects. She refused to go to bed, to eat, to speak, but sat huddled up, silent—unlike Lady Macbeth, preferring darkness to light—for two days and three nights. She too had blood upon her hands that no washing of History can ever clear her of; and, when we read Sir Robert Carey's touching account of his interview with her, 'Shee toake mee by the hand, and wrung it hard, and said "No, Robin, I am not well," and then discoursed with me of her indisposition, and that her heart had been sad and heavy for ten or twelve dayes, and in her discourse she fetched not so few as forty or fifty *great sighes*. I was grieved at the first to see her in this plight: for in my lifetime before I never knew her fetch a sigh, *but when the Queene of Scots was beheaded*;'—when we read of those great sighs, are not the words of the doctor in 'Macbeth' at our lips?—

*Doctor.* What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

*Gent.* I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

Could Shakspeare have had in his mind any thought of the great queen, who had so lately shed the blood of his favourite Essex and imprisoned his friend Pembroke, when he conceived this last appearance of Lady Macbeth? Elizabeth, too, who had indeed borne 'the dignity of the whole body' so long and majestically, was as little amenable to her physicians: 'neither the physitions nor none about her could persuade her to take any course for her safety.' And when Cecil ventured to say 'she *must* go to bed,' the last spark of queenly fire broke forth; 'Must, said she; is *must*



a word to be addressed to Princes?' Well may we utter the forgiving apostrophe of the good doctor—

Infected minds  
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.  
More needs she the divine than the physician,  
God, God, forgive us all!

And then the husband is disclosed to us likewise 'all alone.' He can only brood on in the old way over his premature decay, and that saddest of all reflections, what might have been. Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, he must not look to have, and even his last faithful follower, Seyton, has to be called thrice ere coming to his assistance, only to confirm bad news.

That solitary speech of Macbeth disposes of one theory that he had a son Lulah, afterwards attacked and slain by Malcolm; and that Macduff's cry, 'He has no children,' referred to Malcolm and not Macbeth. Now in the first place Malcolm had a son who succeeded him. And if Lulah was the son of Macbeth, why was he not by his father's side in his last extremity? nor could his father then complain of want of 'love, obedience,' &c.

Macbeth evidently clung to strong belief in his wife's coming pregnancy, which perhaps may serve to account for some of that physical weakness she exhibits. He is feverishly anxious in his inquiries of the doctor, and hints, it may be, at future children's voices that would re-echo his thanks.

I would applaud thee to the very echo  
That should applaud again.

They had years yet to look forward to in the course of nature, for though the horrors on which he had supped had whitened his hair and lined his brow, he was not an old man. Shakspeare, when scarcely forty, talks of himself in the same strain—

That time of year thou may'st in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or few, or none do hang  
Upon the boughs which shake against the cold.

The obvious meaning of Macduff's exclamation is no doubt the right one. Malcolm has tried to console him with

Let's make us med'cines in our great revenge  
To cure this deadly grief,

and he responds, 'He (Macbeth) has no children,' i.e. no, he has no children to slaughter to make his loss equal mine, so the great revenge would not be complete.

The prominence given to the doctors in the latter portion of

the play may have been introduced to please King James, who seems to have had as great a leaning towards doctors as for demonology, for we read of his knighting in 1610 his chief physician in Scotland, whose name, curiously enough, was 'Macbeath.' Another celebrated court physician was Dr. Atkins, who was in attendance on the sickly Prince Charles. Yet the king's power of curing by touch is judiciously alluded to as excelling where surgery has despaired, among the crew of wretched souls whose

malady convinces  
The great assay of art,

and though Lady Macbeth's physician confesses her case to be beyond his practice, it does not destroy Macbeth's confidence in his being able to find her disease,

And purge it to a sound and pristine health,

in spite of his scorn for physic and contempt for drugs.

Another touch to show Macbeth's irresolution is his change of purpose even in putting on or off his armour—at first feverishly restless to put it on before it was needed, then finally ordering it to be brought after him. The distraction of his wife's illness and the desertion of the thanes make him incapable of any determined action, any last effort worthy of his great military fame.

There remains but to witness the closing scene of the tragic drama, which finds Macbeth 'all alone,' his wife gone before him, and his eyes open to the broken reeds yet left him, those 'juggling fiends' 'that keep the word of promise to our ear, but break it to our hope.' Yet his strong love is undiminished, and we disagree with the attribution of a callous hardening of heart to the disputed passage when he receives the fatal news, 'The queen, my lord, is dead.' He is not with her at the last, it is true, but it is his desperate condition, the necessity of rallying the half-hearted hirelings, the wretched kernes that still cling to him, that keeps him from her bedside. We have seen how full his heart is of her, how his strength and vigour is sapped by the thought of her troubled mind. Then though the cry of horror rather than of pity forewarns him of the worst, and steels him to the shock, which surprises even himself in its apparently slight effect, yet that it has struck home deeply, silently, with stunning force, is certainly intended by the exclamation,

She should have died hereafter !

The word 'should' has perplexed commentators, including Dr. Johnson; but why? for if taken in its ordinary sense of 'ought to' the meaning is consistent and intelligible with the following line:

There would have been a time for such a word:  
To-morrow, &c.

*i.e.* she ought to have died hereafter when there would have been a seasonable time for such a word to be uttered, though why Dr. Johnson should wish to substitute 'world' for 'word' is incomprehensible. 'Word,' as signifying that simple announcement 'The queen, my lord, is dead,' is perfectly allowable. If Macbeth only intended to utter the truism that there would have come a time when she must have died, the whole pathos of the scene is ruined, and this famous speech vague and unmeaning. The lines are purposely abrupt to show the emotion, and Salvini, the tragedian, consistently and touchingly rendered the passage clear, if his punctuation was not absolutely justified by the text of 1623, thus, making the pause at the first *To-morrow*. And to-morrow, &c.

All is as vain as a player's mumming or an idiot's tale, till the interruption of the panting messenger with the fatal announcement that Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane wakes Macbeth from the stupor of grief, rouses him for a moment to action, and the old fire at approach of battle flares up within him, the desperate valour of 'Bellona's bridegroom,' and he 'pulls in resolution.' Yet even then the momentary excitement of one more stroke for life, the natural instinct of self-preservation though he could have welcomed death, ebbs away, and he expresses the deeper feeling of desolation,

I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,  
And wish the estate of the world were now undone.

All is over now. His 'dearest chuck'—the one pillar of his life—the one friend whose ear was ever open to his troubles, whose heart strove to soothe his even when comfort was lost to both—she has gone, and what is to come on earth is only a weariness till he can follow her. Hollow are the aims, the vain strivings after nought of the estate of the world; let it all go to wrack—he cares not, for he too is left *alone*!

Such appears to be the most consistent reading of this interjectory broken passage. Like Hamlet, again, Macbeth, from an overwhelming individual sorrow, drifts into a general moralising strain. 'To be or not to be,' may be the question of the hour, but

the brooding mind is carried on from metaphor to metaphor, and its 'currents turn awry' down the vexed stream and eddies of the 'way of life,' till the whole problem of whether it is worth living at all is bound up in his own supreme loss. We fail to see any proof of callousness, any failure to appreciate his loss, any abandonment of that love which was faithful to the last. No indeed, for that would be the last trait in a despicable character that would disgust us, instead of lessening our repugnance, smoothing down the memory of his crimes and cruelty beneath the faint gleam of a lost nobility of inclination, 'the lightning before death' revealed to us in these last fine speeches of Macbeth. For however fearfully their ambition has dragged down and degraded these two, they have at least a strong claim to our sympathy by their mutual devotion—by that unbroken bond of love; life is unbearable to one without the other, and though they have lost all but this—though they each have to meet the dread penalty of their misdeeds alone—their spirits are as one to the bitter end.

### A GOOD MAN'S DILEMMA.

THE clock of St. Martin's was striking ten as Archdeacon Yale, of Studbury, in Gloucestershire, who had taken breakfast at the Athenæum, walked down the club steps, eastward bound. He was a man of fresh complexion and good presence; of tolerable means and some reputation as the author of a curiously morbid book, 'Timon Defended.' As he walked briskly along, an unopened letter which peeped from his pocket seemed—and rightly—to indicate a man free from anxieties; a man almost without a care.

But before he left the dignified stillness of Pall Mall, he found leisure to read this. 'I enclose,' wrote his wife, 'a letter which came for you this morning. I trust, Cyprian, that you are not fretting about the visitation question, and get your meals fairly well cooked.' The Archdeacon paused at this point and smiled faintly as at some pleasant reminiscence. 'Give my love to dear Jack. Oh—h'm—I do not recognise your correspondent's handwriting.'

'Nor do I!' said the Archdeacon aloud; and he opened the enclosure with curiosity that had in it no fear of trouble. After glancing at the signature, however, he turned into a side street and read the letter through. He sighed. 'Oh dear, dear!' he muttered. 'What can I do? I must go! There is no room for refusal. And yet—oh dear!—after all these years. Number 14 Sidmouth Street, Gray's Inn Road? What a place!'

It was a shabby third-rate lodging-house place, as perhaps he knew. But he called a cab and had himself driven thither without delay. At the corner of the street he dismissed the cab and looked about him furtively. For a man who had left his club so free from care, and whose wife at Studbury and son at Lincoln's Inn were well, he wore an oddly anxious face. It could not be—for he was an Archdeacon—that he was about to do anything of which he was ashamed. Of course not. Bishops, and others of that class, may be open to temptations, or have pages of their lives folded down, which they would not wish turned. But an Archdeacon? Oh, no.

Yet when he was distant a house or so from No. 14 he started

guiltily at a very ordinary occurrence—nothing more than the arrival of a hansom cab at the door. True, a young woman descended from it, and let herself into the house with a latchkey. But young women and latchkeys are common in London, as common as—as dirt. It could hardly be that which darkened his face as he rang the bell.

In the hall, where a dun was sitting, there was little to remove any prejudice he may have conceived; little, too, in the dingy staircase, cumbered with plates and stale food; or in the first-floor rooms, from which some one peeped and another whispered, and both giggled; or in that second-floor room, at once smart and shabby, and remarkable for many photographs of one young girl, where he was bidden to wait—little or nothing. But when he had pished and pshawed at the tenth photograph, he was called into an inner room, where a strange silence prevailed. Involuntarily he stepped softly. 'It was kind of you to come,' some one said—some one who was lying in a great chair brought very near to the open window that the speaker might breathe more easily—'very kind. And you have come so quickly too.'

'I have been in London some days,' he answered gently, the fastidious expression gone from his face. 'Your daughter's letter followed me from the country and reached me only an hour ago. It has been no trouble to me to come. I am only pained at finding you so ill.'

'Ah!' she answered. Doubtless her thoughts were busy; while his flew back nearly thirty years to a summer evening, when he had walked with her under the trees in Chelsea Gardens and heard her pour into his ear—she was a young actress then in the first blush of success—all her hopes and ambitions. There was nothing in the memory of which he had need to be ashamed. In those days he had been reading for orders, and, having lodgings in a respectable street, came by chance to know two of his neighbours—her mother and herself. The two were living a quiet domestic life, which surprised and impressed him. The girl's talent and the contrast between her notoriety and her simple ways had a certain charm for him. For some months the neophyte and the actress were as brother and sister. But there the feeling stopped; and when his appointment to a country curacy closed this pretty episode in his life, the exchange of a few letters had but added grace to its ending.

Now old feelings rose to swell his pity as he traced the girl's



features in the woman's face. 'You have a daughter. You have been married since we parted,' he said.

'Yes. It is for her sake I have troubled you,' was her answer. 'She is a good girl—oh, so good! But she has no one in the world except me, and I am leaving her. Poor Grissel!'

'She is on the stage?' he inquired gravely.

'Yes; and she has succeeded young, as I did. We have not been unhappy together. You remember the life my mother and I led? I think it has been the same with us again.'

She smiled ever so little. He remembered something of the quiet pathos of that life. 'Your husband is dead?' he asked.

'Dead! No; I wish he were!' she answered bitterly, the smile passing from her face on the instant. 'My girl had better by far be alone than with her father. Ah, you do not know! When he went to America years ago—with another woman—I thanked God for it. Dead? Oh, no! There is no chance that he is dead.'

Mr. Yale was shocked. 'You have not got a divorce?' he said.

'No. Until last year, when Grissel made a good engagement, we were very poor. Then I fell ill, and there were expenses. We had to come here. Now that her name is known he will come back and find her out. She plays as Kittie Latouche, but the profession know who she is, and—and what can I do? Oh, Mr. Yale! tell me what I can do for her.'

Her anxiety unnerved him. Her terror of the future, not her own, but her child's, wrung his heart. He had a presentiment whither she was leading him, and he tried to murmur some commonplace of encouragement.

'You may yet recover,' he urged. 'At any rate, there will be time to talk of this again.'

'There will not be time,' she entreated him. 'I have scarcely three days to live, and then my child will be alone. Oh, Mr. Yale! help me. She is young and handsome, with no one to guide her. If her father return, he will be her worst enemy. There is some one, too—some gentleman—who has fallen in with her, and been here. He may be a friend—what you were to me—or not. Don't you understand me?' she cried piteously. 'How can I leave her unless you—there is no one else whom I can ask—will protect her?'

He started and looked round for relief, but found none. 'I?

It is impossible!' he cried. 'Oh dear, dear! I am afraid that it is impossible, Mrs. Kent.'

'Not impossible! I do not ask you to give her a home or money! Only care. If you will be her guardian—her friend——'

She was a woman dying in sore straits. He was a merciful man. In the end he promised to do what she wished. Then he hastened to escape her gratitude, unconscious, as he passed down the stairs, of the whispering and giggling, the slatternliness and dirt, which had been so dreadful to him on his entrance.

He walked along Oxford Street in a reverie, 'Poor thing!' falling from him at intervals, until he reached the corner of Tottenham Court Road, and his eye rested upon a hoarding—at the first idly, then with a purpose, finally with a timid sidelong glance. The advertisement which had caught his attention was a coarse engraving of half a dozen heads, arranged in a circle, with one in the centre. Under this last, which was larger and more staring, and less to be evaded than the others, appeared the words, 'Miss Kittie Latouche.' He went on with a shiver, crossing here and there to avoid the hoardings, but only to fall in with a string of sandwich-men bearing the same device, and to plunge into the haven of Soho as if he were a political conspirator.

The portrait and the name of his ward! In a few days he would be left in charge of an actress whose name was known to all London—guardian, *in loco parentis*, what you will, of the closest and most responsible, to a giddy girl of unknown antecedents, and too well-known name! He wondered whether Archdeacon had ever been in such a position before, a position which it would be hard to acknowledge and impossible to explain. He could talk of his old friendship for her mother, the actress, and his duty to a dying woman. But would the world believe him? Would even his wife believe him? Would not she read much between the lines, though the space might be as white as snow? He, a man of over fifty, grew red and white by turns as he thought of this. 'I will tell it all to Jack,' was his first resolve. 'I will tell it him at dinner to-night,' he groaned. But would he have the courage? He had a secret respect for his son's practical nature. He had heard him called 'as hard as nails.' And when he found himself opposite to him, and eyed the cool, close-shaven young lawyer, who looked a decade older than his years, he resorted to a subterfuge.

'Jack,' he said, 'I want your opinion for a friend of mine.'

'It is at your service, sir,' said his son, his hand upon the apricots. 'What is the subject? Law?'

'Not precisely,' replied the Archdeacon, clearing his throat. 'It is rather a question of knowledge of the world. You know, my boy,' he went on, 'that I have a very high opinion of your discretion.'

'You are very good,' said Jack. And he did that which was unusual with him. He blushed; but the other did not observe it.

'My friend, who, I may say, is a clergyman in my archdeaconry,' resumed the elder gentleman, 'has been appointed guardian—it is a ridiculous thing for a man in his position—to a young actress. She is quite a girl, I understand, but of some notoriety already.'

'Indeed,' said Jack drily. 'May I ask how that came about? Wards of that kind do not fall from heaven—as a rule.'

The Archdeacon winced. 'He tells me,' he explained, 'that her mother was an old friend of his, and when she died, some time back, she left the girl as a kind of legacy, you see.'

'A legacy to him, sir?'

'To him, certainly. You follow me?' said the elder man in some distress.

'Quite so,' said Jack. 'Oh, quite so! A common thing, no doubt. Did you say that your friend was a married man, sir?'

'Yes,' replied the Archdeacon faintly.

'Just so! just so!' his son said, in the same tone, a tone that was so dreadful to the Archdeacon that it needed Jack's question, 'And what is the point upon which he wants advice?' to induce him to go on.

'What he had better do, being a clergyman.'

'He should have thought of that earlier—ahem!—I mean it depends a good deal on the young lady. There are actresses *and* actresses, you know.'

'I suppose so,' the Archdeacon admitted grudgingly. He was in a mood to see the darkest side of his difficulty.

'Of course there are!' said Jack, for him quite warmly. And indeed that is the worst of barristers. They will argue in season and out of season if you do not agree with them quickly. 'Some are as good—as good girls as my mother when you married her, sir.'

'Well, well, she may be a good girl—I do not know,' the elder man allowed.

‘You always had rather a prejudice against the stage, sir.’

The Archdeacon looked up sharply, thinking this uncalled for; unless, horrible thought! his son knew something of the matter, and was chaffing him. He made an effort to get on firmer ground. ‘Granted she is a good girl,’ he said, ‘there are still two difficulties. Her father is a rascal, and there is a man, probably a rascal too, hanging about her, and likely to give trouble in another way.’

Jack nodded and sagely pondered over the position. ‘I think I should advise your friend to get some respectable woman to live with the girl,’ he suggested, ‘and play the duenna, first getting rid of your second rascal.’

‘But how will you do that? And what would you do about the father?’

‘Buy him off!’ said Jack curtly. ‘As to the lover, have an interview with him. Say to him, “Do you wish to marry my ward? If you do, who are you? If you do not, go about your business.”’

‘But if he will not go,’ said the Archdeacon, ‘what can my friend do?’

‘Well, indeed,’ replied Jack, looking rather nonplussed, ‘I hardly know, unless you make her a ward of court. You see,’ he added apologetically, ‘your friend’s position is a little—shall I say a little anomalous?’

The Archdeacon shuddered. He dropped his napkin and picked it up again, to hide his dismay, and plunged into a fresh subject. When his son upon some excuse left him early, he was glad to be alone. He had now, however, a course laid down for him, and acting upon it, he next day saw the landlady in Sidmouth Street and requested her to take charge of the young lady in the event of the mother’s death and to guard her from intrusion until other arrangements could be made. ‘You will look to me for all expenses,’ added the Archdeacon, seizing with eagerness upon the only ground on which he felt himself at home. To which the landlady gladly said she would, and accepted Mr. Yale’s address at the Athenæum Club as a personal favour to herself.

So the Archdeacon, free for the moment, went down to Studbury, and as he walked about his shrubberies with the scent of his wife’s old-fashioned flowers in the air, or sat drinking his glass of Léoville ’74 after dinner, while Winnall the butler,

anxious to get to his supper, rattled the spoons on the sideboard, he tried to believe it a dream. What, he wondered, would Winnall say if he knew that master had a ward, and that ward a play-actress? or, as Studbury would prefer to style her, a painted Jezebel? And what would Mrs. Yale say, who loved lavender, and had seen a ballet—once? Was Archdeacon ever, he asked himself, in a position so—so anomalous before?

‘My dear,’ his wife remarked when he had read his letters one morning, ‘I am sure you are not well. I have noticed that you have not been yourself since you were in London.’

‘Nonsense,’ he replied tartly.

‘It is not nonsense. There is something preying on your mind. I believe,’ she persisted, ‘it is that visitation, Cyprian, that is troubling you.’

‘Visitation? What visitation?’ he said incautiously. For indeed he had forgotten all about that very important business, and could think only of a visitation more personal to himself. Before his wife could hold up her hands in astonishment, ‘What visitation! indeed!’ he had escaped into the open air. Mrs. Kent was dead.

Yes, the blow had fallen; but the first shock over, things were made very easy for him. He wrote to his ward as soon after the funeral as seemed decent, and her answer greatly pleased him. Ready as he was to scent misbehaviour in the air, he thought it a proper letter, a good girl’s letter. She did not deny his right to give advice. She had not, she said, seen the gentleman he mentioned since her mother’s death, although Mr. Charles Williams—that was his name—had called several times; but she had given him an appointment for the following Tuesday, and was willing that Mr. Yale should see him on that occasion.

All this in a formal and stately way; but there was something in the tone of her reference to Mr. Williams which led the Archdeacon to smile sagely. ‘She is over head and ears in love,’ he thought. And in his reply, after saying that he would be in Sidmouth Street on Tuesday at the hour named, he added that if there appeared to be nothing against Mr. Charles Williams he, the Archdeacon, would have pleasure in forwarding his ward’s happiness.

‘I am going to London to-morrow, my dear, for two nights,’ he said to his wife on the Sunday evening. ‘I have some business there.’

Mrs. Yale sat silent for a moment, as if she had not heard. Then she laid down her book and folded her hands. 'Cyprian,' she said, 'what is it?'

The Archdeacon was fussing with his pile of sermons and did not turn. 'What is what, my dear?' he asked.

'Why are you going to London?'

'On business, my dear; business,' he said lightly.

'Yes, but what business?' replied Mrs. Yale with decision. 'Cyprian, you are keeping something from me; you were not used to have secrets from me. Tell me what it is.'

But he remained obstinately silent. He would not tell a lie, and he could not tell the truth.

'Is it about Jack, Cyprian?' with sudden conviction. 'I know what it is; he has entangled himself with some girl!'

The Archdeacon laughed oddly. 'You ought to know your son better by this time, my dear. He is about as likely to entangle himself with a girl as—I am.'

But Mrs. Yale shook her head unconvinced. The Archdeacon was a squire, though a poor one. It was his choicest ambition, and his wife's, that Jack should some day be rich enough to live at the Hall, instead of letting it, as Mr. Yale found it necessary to do. But while the Archdeacon considered that Jack's way to the Hall lay over the woolsack, his wife had in view a short cut to it through the marriage market, being a woman, and so thinking it a small sin in a man to marry for money. Consequently she lived in fear lest Jack should be entrapped by some penniless fair one, and was not wholly reassured now. 'Well, I shall be sure to find out, Cyprian,' she said warningly, 'if you are deceiving me.'

And these words recurred disagreeably to the Archdeacon's mind on his way to town and afterwards. They rendered him as sensitive as a mole in the sunshine. He found London almost intolerable. He could not walk the streets without seeing those horrid placards, nor take up a newspaper without being stared out of countenance by the name 'Kittie Latouche.' While his conscience so multiplied each bill and poster and programme that in twenty-four hours London seemed to him a great hoarding of which his ward was the sole lessee.

Naturally he shrank into himself as he passed down Sidmouth Street next day. He pondered, standing on the steps of No. 14, what the neighbours thought of the house; whether they knew



that 'Kittie Latouche' lived there. He was spared the giggling and dirty plates on the stairs, but looking round the room at the ten photographs, and thinking what Mrs. Yale would say could she see him, he shuddered. He picked up nervously the first pamphlet he saw on the table. It was a trifle in one act: 'The Tench,' Lacy's edition, by Charles Williams. He set it down with a grimace, and a word about birds of a feather. And then the door by which he had entered opened behind him, and he turned.

One look was enough. The kindly expression faded from his handsome features on the instant. His face turned to flame. The veins of his forehead swelled with passion, and he strode forward as though he would seize the intruder bodily. 'How dare you,' he cried hoarsely when he could find his voice—'how dare you follow me? How dare you play the spy upon me, sir? Speak!'

But Jack—for Jack it was—had no answer ready. He seemed for once to have lost (astonished at being taken in this way, perhaps) his presence of mind. 'I do not quite understand,' he said helplessly.

'Understand? you understand,' cried the Archdeacon, his son's very confusion seeming to condemn him unheard, 'that you have meanly followed me to—to detect me in—in——' And there he came to a deadlock, and, redder than before, thundered, 'Are you not ashamed of yourself, sir?'

'I thought I saw a back I knew,' muttered Jack, looking everywhere but at his father, which was terribly irritating. 'I was coming through the street.'

'You were coming through the street; I suppose you often pass through Sidmouth Street!' retorted the Archdeacon with withering sarcasm, but swallowing some of his wrath.

'Very often,' said Jack so sturdily that his father could not but believe him, and was further sobered. 'I saw a back I thought I knew, and I came in here. I had no intention of offending you, sir. And now I think I will go,' he added, looking about him uneasily, 'and—and speak to you another time.'

But the Archdeacon's anger was short-lived. A wretched embarrassment was already taking its place as it dawned upon him that after all Jack might by pure chance have seen him enter and have followed innocently. In that case how had he committed himself by his outbreak—how indeed! 'Jack,' he said sweetly, 'I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon, Jack. I see I

was mistaken. Do not go, my boy, until I have explained to you why I am here. It is not, perhaps,' he went on, smiling a wretched smile at the pretty faces round him, 'quite the place in which you would expect to find me.'

'It is certainly not the place in which I did expect to find you, sir,' said Jack bluntly. And he looked about him also in a dazed fashion, as if the Archdeacon and the photographs were not a conjunction for which he was prepared.

'No, no,' assented the Archdeacon, wincing, however. 'But it is the simplest piece of business in the world which has brought me here.' And he recalled to his son's memory their talk at the club.

'Ah, I understand!' said Jack, as if he did, too. 'You have come about your friend's business.'

The Archdeacon could not hide a spasm. 'Well, not precisely. To tell you the truth, there never was a friend, Jack. But,' he went on hurriedly, holding up a hand of dignified protest, for Jack had looked at him queerly, very queerly, 'you know me too well to doubt me, I hope, when I say there is no ground for doubt?'

The son's keen eyes met the father's for an instant, and then a rare smile softened them as the men's hands met. 'I do, sir. You may be sure of that!' he said brightly.

The Archdeacon cleared his throat. 'Thank you,' he said; 'now I think you will understand the position. Miss Kent, the young lady in question, lives here; and I have called to-day to see her by appointment.'

'The dickens you have! It is like your impudence!' cried some one—some one behind them.

Both men swung round at the interruption. In the doorway, holding the door open with one hand, while with the other splayed against the wall he balanced himself on his feet, stood a smart Jewish-looking man. 'The dickens you have!' this gentleman repeated, leering on the two most unpleasantly. 'So that is your game, is it? Ain't you ashamed of yourself,' he continued, addressing himself particularly to the shuddering Archdeacon—and how far away seemed Winnall and the lavender, and the calm delights of Studbury at that moment!—'ain't you ashamed of yourself, old man?'

'This is a private room,' said Jack sternly, anticipating his father's outburst. 'You do not seem to be aware of it, my friend.'

'A private room, is it?' replied the visitor, closing one eye with much enjoyment. 'A private room, and what then?'

'This much, that you are requested to leave it.'

'Ho, ho!' replied the man; 'so you would put me out of my daughter's room, would you—out of my daughter's room? I dare say that you would like to do it.' Then, with a sudden change to ferocity, he added, 'You are bragging above your cards, young man. Dry up, do you hear? Dry up.'

And Jack did dry up, falling back against the table with a white face and trembling hands. The Archdeacon, even in his own misery—misery which far exceeded his presentiments—saw and marvelled at his son's collapse. That Jack, keen, practical, hard-headed Jack, should be so completely overwhelmed by collision with this creature, and so plainly scared by his insinuations, infected the Archdeacon with a kind of terror. Yet, struggling against the feeling, he forced himself to say, 'You are Mr. Kent, I presume?'

'I am, sir; yours to command,' swaggered the wretch.

'Then I may tell you that your daughter,' the Archdeacon continued, resuming something of his natural self-possession, 'was left in my charge by your wife, and that I am here in consequence of that arrangement.'

'Gammon!' replied Mr. Kent distinctly, putting his tongue in his cheek. 'Gammon! Do you think that story will go down with me? Do you think it will go down with any one?'

'It is the truth.'

'All right; but look here, when did you see my wife? On her death-bed. Once. And before that—not for twenty years. Well, what do you make of it now? Why,' he exclaimed, with genuine admiration in his tone, 'you have the impudence of the old one himself! Fie on you, sir! Ain't you ashamed of hanging about stage doors, and following actresses home at your age? But I know you. And your friends shall know you, Archdeacon Yale, of the Athenæum Club. You will hear more of this!'

'You are an insolent fellow!' cried the clergyman. But the perspiration stood in great beads upon his brow, and his quivering lips betrayed the agony of his soul as he writhed under the man's coarse insinuations. The awkwardness and improbability of the tale he would have to tell in his defence flashed across his mind while the other was speaking. He saw how cogently the silence he had maintained about the matter would tell against him. He

pictured the nudge of one friend, the wink of another, and his own crimsoning cheeks. His son's unwonted silence, too, that touched him home. Yet he tried to bear himself as an innocent man; he struggled to give back look for look. 'You are a mad-man and a scoundrel, besides being drunk!' he said stoutly. 'If it were not so, or—or I were as young as my son here——'

'I do not see him,' said the man curtly.

'Jack!' cried the Archdeacon, purple with indignation. 'Jack! if you have a voice, speak to him, sir!'

'It won't do,' replied Mr. Kent, shaking his head. 'Call him Charley, and I might believe you.'

'Charley?' repeated the Archdeacon mechanically.

'Ay, Charley—Charley Williams. Oh, I know him, too,' with vulgar triumph. 'I have not been hanging about this house for two days for nothing. He has been here heaps of times! What you two are doing together beats me, I confess. But I am certain of this, that I have caught you both—killed two birds with one stone, eh?'

It was the Archdeacon's turn to fall back, nerveless and aghast. The light that shone in upon him with those words so blinded him that every spark of his anger paled and dwindled before it. His son, Charles Williams? He sought in that son's eyes, sought with a pitiful eagerness, some gleam of denial. But Jack's eyes avoided his; Jack's downcast air seemed only too strongly to confirm the insolent charge. The shock was a severe one, taking from him all thought of himself. The why and wherefore of his presence there could never again be questioned by any one. A real sorrow, a real trouble to be faced gave him courage. 'Jack!' he said with sternness, 'we had better go from here. Come with me. For you, sir,' he continued proudly, turning to the actor, 'your suspicions are natural to you. Nothing I can say will remove them. So be it. They affect me not one whit. It is enough for me that I came here in all honour, and with an honourable purpose.'

'Indeed,' replied Mr. Kent mockingly. 'Indeed? And your son, Mr. Charles Jack Williams Yale, Archdeacon? No doubt you will "answer for him," as he has not got a word to say for himself? He, too, came with an honourable purpose, I suppose? Oh yes, of course; we are all honourable men!'

For an instant the Archdeacon quailed. He saw the pitfall dug before him. He knew all that his answer would imply of

disappointed hopes and a vain ambition. He recognised all that could be made of it by his listeners, friend or foe, and he blenched. But the cynical eye and sneering lip of the wretch confronting him recalled him to himself. Nay, he seemed to rise above himself, as he replied more loudly and with haughty, inflated nostrils, 'Yes, yes, sir; I *will* answer for my son too as for myself! I will answer for him that he came here in all honour.'

The man sneered still, but he knew better things if he did not ensue them, and he stood aside with secret respect and let the two go unmolested.

'Sir,' said Jack when they had walked halfway down the street in silence, which his father showed no sign of breaking, 'you are thinking more ill of me than I deserve.'

'You gave a false name,' the Archdeacon snarled.

'Not in a sense—not wilfully, I mean. I wrote a little play some time ago, and, as is usual for professional men, I submitted it under a *nom de plume*. I was known as Charles Williams at the theatre, and I had no more idea of doing wrong when I was introduced in that name to Grissel than I have now.'

'I hope not,' said the Archdeacon grimly. He was not a man to go back from an engagement. 'I trust not,' he added with a lofty bitterness. 'You may break your word to the girl if you please, but I will not break mine to the mother. So help me Heaven!'

'Sir,' said Jack, his utterance a little husky, 'she is a good girl, and some day she will honour you as I do.'

They parted without more words; the Archdeacon, hardly master of his thoughts as yet, walked on quickly until he reached the corner of Oxford Street; but there he paused, and seeing girls pass, young, graceful, soft-eyed, leaning back in carriages with parcels round them, and thinking that Jack might have chosen out of all these, while he had chosen in Sidmouth Street—Sidmouth Street, Gray's Inn Road—he, the Archdeacon, could not stifle a groan. He plunged recklessly across and found himself presently in St. James' Square, and round and round this he sauntered, fighting the battle with himself. His poor wife, that was the burden of his cry. His poor wife, and the shock it would be to her, and the downfall of hopes! He knew that she as a woman must recoil from such a daughter-in-law far more than he did, who had known Grissel's mother, and knew too that actresses may be good and true women. It would be dreadful for her, the

Archdeacon knew it ; but he valued one thing above even the peace of his home, and that was his honour. It was not in sarcasm we called him a good man. To break his word to the dead woman who had trusted him ; to leave this girl, whom it behoved him to protect, in the hands of her wretched father, and so to leave her with her faith in goodness shattered—this Archdeacon Yale could not do.

But he was tempted that night to think hard things of Jack, to think that Jack, who had never given him the heartache before, had yet better not have been born than bring this trouble on them. It went no farther than temptation, and he was marvellously thankful next morning that he had not framed the thought in words ; for, as he entered the breakfast room, looking a year older than he had seemed chipping his egg yesterday, the hall-porter put a telegram into his hands. 'Come at once—Jack,' were the words that first made themselves intelligible to him ; and then, but a few seconds later, the address 'St. Thomas's Hospital.'

How swiftly does a great misfortune, a great loss, a great pain, expel a less ! I have known a man lose his wife and go heavily for a month, and then losing a thousand pounds become as oblivious of her as if she had never been born. But the Archdeacon was not such a man, and rattling towards Westminster in a cab felt not only that a thousand pounds would be a small price to pay for his son's safety, but that, if Providence should take him at his thought, he might have worse news for his wife than those tidings which had almost aged him in a night.

His son, however, met him at the great gates, whole and sound, but with a grave face. 'You are too late, sir,' he said quietly, yet flushing a little at the grasp of his father's hand, and more when the Archdeacon told him to pay the cabman a double fare. 'I have brought you here for nothing. He died a quarter of an hour ago, sinking very rapidly after I sent to you.'

'Who ? Who died ?' asked the Archdeacon, pressing one hand very heavily on the other's shoulder, as they walked slowly back towards the bridge.

'Mr. Kent.'

The elder man said nothing for a while—aloud at least. But presently he asked Jack to tell him about it.

'There is little to tell. After we left him he went out. Going home again late at night, and not I fear very steady, he was run down by a road-car. When they brought him to the hospital he



was hopelessly injured, but quite sensible. They fetched his daughter, and then he asked for me—as your son. He did not know my address, but the assistant-surgeon happened to be a friend of mine, and did, and he sent a cab for me.’

And really that seemed all. ‘It is very, very sudden; but—Heaven forgive me!—I cannot regret his death,’ said the clergyman. ‘It is impossible.’

They had reached the corner of the bridge. ‘There is something else I should tell you,’ Jack said nervously. ‘When he had sent for me he had a lawyer brought, and made his will.’

‘His will!’ repeated the Archdeacon, somewhat startled. ‘Had he anything to leave?’ He asked the question rather in pity for so wretched a creature as the man had seemed to him than out of curiosity.

‘If we may believe him,’ said Jack slowly, ‘and I think he was telling the truth, he was worth thirty thousand pounds.’

‘Impossible!’ cried the Archdeacon.

‘I do not know,’ replied Jack. ‘But we shall soon learn. He said he had made it in oil, and had come home as a poor man to see how his wife and child would receive him. I do not think he was all bad,’ Jack continued thoughtfully. ‘There must have been a streak of romance in him.’

‘I fear,’ muttered the Archdeacon very sensibly, ‘that it is all romance!’

But it was not all romance; truth beats fiction; there is oil in the States yet, and Mr. Kent, of whom since he is dead we all speak with respect, by hook or crook had got his share. The thirty thousand pounds were really discovered pleasantly fructifying in Argentine railways, and proved as many reasons why Mrs. Yale, when Jack’s fate became known to her, should still smile again. The Archdeacon put it neatly: To marry an actress is a grave offence because a common one, and one easily committed; but to marry an actress with thirty thousand pounds! Well, such ladies are not blackberries, nor do they grow on every bush.

Mr. and Mrs. John Yale have not yet established themselves at the Hall. They live at Henley, and their house is the resort in summer of all kinds of people, among whom the Archdeacon is a very butterfly. An idea prevails—though a few of us are in the secret—that Mrs. Jack comes, in common with so many other pretty women, of an old Irish family; and the other day I over-

heard an amusing scrap of conversation at her table. 'Mrs. Yale,' some one was saying, 'do you know that you remind me so strongly, if I may say it without offence, of Miss Kittie Latouche, the actress?'

'Indeed?' replied the lady with a charming blush. 'And do you know that you are on dangerous ground? My husband was in love with that young lady before he knew me, and I believe that he secretly regrets her now.'

'Tit for tat!' cried Jack. 'Let us all begin telling tales. If my wife was not in love with one Mr. Charles Williams a month—only a month—before she married me, I will eat her.'

'Oh, Jack!' exclaimed the lady, covered with confusion. But this story would not be believed in Studbury, where Mrs. John passes for being a little shy, a little timid, and not a little prudish.

## NOTES BY A NATURALIST.

### ROOKS AND THEIR RELATIVES.

THAT fine bird, the raven, will soon be a lost link in England, unless some ardent lovers of the ornaments of our woods and hills procure protection for him in some way or other. Some years back he was frequently to be seen. I have known him breed within half a mile of a country town on a gentleman's estate; a pair built their nest in a great ragged Scotch fir, but after their young ones had been taken from them twice to be kept as domestic pets, they deserted their quarters and were not seen there again.

The raven is a handsome bird; his jet-black plumage shows flashes of blue and purple; and when a little excited the feathers on his throat are puffed out, the wings drooped, and he half hops, half walks round his dwelling place, crying 'cruk-cruk-croak!' continually cocking his head, first on one side, then on the other, if any one stops to admire him. His bright eyes will take in all the surroundings in a most wide-awake manner; you will not catch him off his guard, nor will it be safe for any one but his owner to attempt to stroke his plumage. That pickaxe of a bill can give a blow not soon forgotten. The worst of keeping a raven as a pet is—and the same thing applies to crows, rooks, and jackdaws when in a state of captivity—he will carry off and hide away any article that takes his fancy. Other birds and animals will hide their surplus food, and nothing more; but the raven secures anything that takes his fancy, a watch and chain, a pocket knife, a silver spoon, or a hymn-book; and he will plan out the job some time before he attempts to execute it. In nine cases out of ten he manages to carry it out successfully. I once saw a raven's curiosity shop overhauled. It was in a large heap of garden refuse; the bird stood watching them turn it out; after there had been long and vain dodging of his wily movements, and as one article after another was brought to light, he made several most determined attempts to recover what he evidently considered his individual property. Being foiled, he 'cut up rough,' to say the least of it, and refused comfort of all kinds. Day after day they found him hopping round his beloved hiding-place, croaking like a feathered demon. I am not prepared to give any opinion as to

the harm the raven may be supposed to do by some people—I can only say that in my own neighbourhood, which is surrounded on all sides by the Surrey hills, I have never heard any complaints about him; not even in breeding time. Probably a pair or two would be very useful in some places where birds have been cut down by disease and lie rotting all over the land. One thing is against him, he is considered a bird of ill omen; if one or a couple make up their minds to settle down near any habitation, a charge of shot is their certain welcome.

It is a wonder that any are left in the country; it is said some are still to be found in the wild parts of Sussex, but I cannot vouch for the fact, though I think it is very likely to be true.

The crow, or carrion crow, is to all intents and purposes a dwarf raven. In shape and plumage he resembles his giant relative, and he is even more reviled than the raven. Tell any gamekeeper that you consider the crow a bold and handsome bird, and he will either answer you with some highly seasoned observations, or look at you with an expression of wondering pity, and then try to enlighten your dark mind as to that bird's capabilities for evil and mischief. He hunts them from morning to night, often with very little success; a good old carrion crow is not got at very easily. If a pair of them hunt together, the chance of knocking them over is very slight indeed, for one will watch while the other feeds. On hearing the least sound, or at the sight of a suspicious object, there is a dip up and down of the body, a flirt with the outspread tail, and 'croake-e, croake-e!'—the keeper may turn his attention to some other matters, for he will not see them again during the next hour or two. As a rule he is put out of the way by trap or poison; he is in such bad odour with game preservers that one crow will keep three or four on a large estate on the look-out for him.

In a confined state he resembles the raven very much in his manœuvres and method of feeding.

The hooded crow, or grey crow of the coast-people, is in shape like the carrion crow, but his habits are very different. He likes the sea-shore and the downs gently rising from the edge of the water arms of the sea; and the creeks that run inland for miles are his favourite places of resort when he pays his visits, for he is more or less a bird of passage. I have watched him there many a time as he moved about continually. You will not find numbers of them, but single pairs dotted along the coast close to the water's edge in autumn and winter. The black-backed gull and herring-

gull range the coast line, the common gull the creeks and flats. Feeding near, and sometimes with them, you will see the hooded crow. Sometimes he is shot miles inland, where he has certain favourite places of resort; in the large tracts of uncultivated country that fortunately still remain to us he is quite at home, and he does his best to live honestly there. There is much insane raving about cultivating the wastes for the benefit of the community at large, but I should like to see the babblers try the experiment; the ground is so poor in the best portions of some of these 'wastes' that it will not grow enough nourishing vegetation to fatten the rabbits—called hedgehog rabbits—that swarm in the barren spots. If one wished to offend a person, one could not do it more effectually than by inviting him to dine off a pair of these pinwire vermin.

The hooded crow will walk round the sheepfolds, perch on the top of the fold stakes, and examine the sheep with a critical eye, especially if there is any disease about. He is constantly flapping from one spot to another; I do not think I have ever seen one quiet for five minutes together. The grave charges preferred against his near relative are not extended to him; he seems to be a useful picker-up of unconsidered trifles, a grey-cloaked scavenger of the line of downs and sandhills bordering on the seashore.

The common rook, common though he is, is very little known or understood by a great many of the people who see him fly overhead or walk behind the plough. For twelve years I have lived close to a large rookery, and have had the birds about, within a few yards of my house door, at all seasons. In the spring his plumage glistens in the sunlight as he walks about. Anyone seeing him bow to the object of his affections, puffing out his feathers and making a fan of his tail, would call him a handsome fellow. He is a most intelligent bird, devoted to his wife and family, and has an excellent character for early rising. There are differences of opinion as to his qualities amongst agriculturists; but I should say the verdict must be in his favour, for among twenty sorts of birds shot you will not find one rook, and he is a difficult bird to get if you want one as a specimen.

About the middle of February they are busy inspecting their nests of the previous season. Long and loud are the discussions as to the amount of repairs needed for their airy cradles. These continue for some days, the birds going back, as evening draws near, to the roosting-places where they have slept all through the

winter months. One such place, heavily timbered, and well sheltered, and having a southern aspect, is near my house. It holds them in vast numbers, and thence the congregated rookeries spread in all directions; each lot of rooks going to the same line of country that they had been in the habit of frequenting during the previous breeding season, and all returning to the grand old roosting-spot at night. I watch their movements morning and evening with great interest. Directly it is light they are high up in the air, looking no larger than blackbirds. As they come over their famous breeding-place in the old lime avenue of the park, they fly round and round in circles, cawing loudly. Then they commence a series of tumbling and darting movements of the most curious and rapid nature. Those who have not seen it would not think them capable of so great a command of wing. After these gyrations they look at their old nests and then fly off to feed; and some break off from the main body and visit the elms that have not been blown down at the Court Lodge farm. Others go to some elms in one of the hedgerows where a small colony has started a nesting-place. After a heavy gale of wind they are sure to be seen very closely inspecting the nests, directly it is over. It is wonderful how long these will last, and what hurricanes they will bear the brunt of without being seriously damaged. Constructed in the first instance of green and pliant twigs, they are laced into the pliant forked and topmost branches of the trees, and the whole fabric swings backwards and forwards as the wind blows. They are not often blown out of the trees, but once I did see this happen, just at the time when the young ones were beginning to call to their parents. A terrible gale cleared the lot from the trees and drove the old birds all over the place. On the following day, when all was very quiet again, they sat about in the trees, looking most dejected, their heads drawn in to their shoulders, mere black bunches of misery.

They are very fond of their young, and pay them the greatest attention. May and June are the months to watch their domestic economy, for the rookery is in full voice and activity then, and father rook is busy digging from morning till night.

The bare space under the bill and round it is a natural feature of the bird, and not caused by his digging operations as some might suppose. He looks after his mate well when she is sitting, and when the young are lately hatched and she is not yet able to leave them. Then the pouch which is under his bill comes into



requisition. He collects all kinds of dainties, beetles, grubs, worms, and other small trifles, until a good-sized pellet is formed, larger than a walnut. This he bears up to her, and perching close to the nest he cackles to her in the most affectionate manner, which she responds to in the same way; then she opens her mouth and her mate places his collection of dainties in it and flies off at once for another stock of provisions. She does not swallow the whole at first, but twists the pellet over and bites it about; all the digestible portion is then devoured, the rest she lets fall to the ground. This process goes on all day, from the early morning till late in the evening; father rook filling his own stomach at the same time. It is a very anxious time for him and his partner when the young ones leave the nest and begin to perch a little on the branches; for then rook-shooting commences. This sport is not so much followed as it used to be. At the first two or three discharges the whole rookery is in a cawing uproar. Then, as the young ones fall, one after another, with a thud on to the ground, they can put up with it no longer, but rise in a black cloud and ring round and round, gradually getting higher and higher until they are at an immense height, looking like small black spots, their clamour sounding very faint on the ear. It is only when the day is drawing to a close that they will come down and count the living.

In exceptionally hot and dry summers, like that of 1887, the rook suffers as much as he does in a severe winter, for the ground is too hard for them to get anything out of it; the worms and other things have gone low down where they can find moisture. I have seen them all through the summer, driven by hunger, throw off their natural caution and come boldly into the gardens of the populous town for the fruit and vegetables. They would pull the half-ripe cherries off the trees in bunches, within a few yards of one. As for the new potatoes, they would have dug them all up if they had not been shot at all day long. They hunted over low-lying water-meadows, and water-courses, and rubbish heaps for what they could pick up. Many of the birds had only just enough life in them to flap along. When a things were at the worst a change set in for the better, and warm rain fell in the neighbourhood at intervals during twenty-four hours.

Close to the rookery is a recreation-ground, like a small common, and used for grazing purposes. It is covered with fine

turf. Upon this is my house, and close to it is the rookery. When the rain was falling their manifestations of delight were great; they perched thick on the bare branches of the dead trees, and cawed and cackled to their heart's content, shaking the water off their feathers like half-mad things. The rain brought the worms out of their holes in thousands all over the burnt-up surface. Down flew the rooks, and the first time for many weeks they made a hearty meal. Some of them, in fact, gorged to such an extent that they flew up on to the drying-posts scattered over the ground, and sat there without taking notice of anything or anybody. The next day not a rook was to be seen near the town. Hard times were over for them, and they were scattered far and wide over the surrounding fields.

In the autumn when the nuts are ripe the rook is busy. Walnuts are his especial favourites. You will not see a bird near the place until they are ready for thrashing down; but when that time has come a solitary pioneer will appear first, high up, inspecting the tree or trees. The next day he will be joined by one or two more. After wheeling about and over the place they will settle and examine the state of the crop. If the outer rind is loosened from the shell of the nut, a problem soon solved by the birds' biting a piece off, they will fly away and give information to the rest that luxuries are to be had. Then a number come, nipping the nuts off in the most wholesale manner and flying off with them. In the first field or meadow they dine; with a dig or two of the powerful bill they split off the outer covering, and then with one more dig open the nut and eat the contents. They are quickly back for more.

'Hi! Gip! Rooks!' cries a man's voice, and a fine old dog dashes over the lawn a dozen times a day, barking his loudest to scare them off, for if left to themselves they will clear the heaviest crop from the trees in a very short time. It is no use thinking of shooting them; you may point a stick at them and flourish it about as much as you like, and it will not disturb them in the least. A gun is a different matter; only let them catch sight of one, and instead of committing their robberies in an open and deliberate manner, as is their usual way, they will clatter into the trees like hawks when they get a chance, nip off the nuts and fly away. The only effectual plan is to trap one. I once saw the experiment tried. One of them hopped into a common trap, set openly, only so secured that the bird could not fly off with it.

Finding himself in trouble the rook yelled out his note of alarm. Up the others cluttered, cawing their loudest and dropping some of their plunder. All their friends round about came to see what was the matter and to join in the uproar. Flying round and dashing down to him as though to get him out, and finding this no use, they were frightened out of their wits by their comrade's frantic shouts, and they mounted high up in the air, cawing their loudest. When the captive had his neck twisted, and he was spread-eagled out on a stick for his companions' inspection, the business was settled; not a single rook has been near the place from that time. I have often proved the fact that shooting some does not affect the rest in the least; but trapping one upsets the whole rookery for a long time. When that calamity has once taken place it is put down in their note-book, and no matter what may be the attractions of the locality, it is shunned with the greatest caution.

Unlike the ravens, the rooks are supposed by many to bring peace and prosperity about a place of abode. It is easy to understand the reasons for this idea. When Bishop Selwyn came from the Antipodes to succeed Bishop Lonsdale in the diocese of Lichfield, he did not choose to make his home at the palace, two miles away from the centre of his work, but forsook it to return to the large residence in the Close. Bishop's Court in Auckland had always been the home of the Anglican missionaries when in town, and the bishop wished his English clergy to have the same feeling about his house in Lichfield. For years the rooks had forsaken the fine old elms which partially surround the Close. The year the old house was again inhabited by that true shepherd of his flock, the rooks returned to remain, and their coming back was commemorated in a very pleasant poem written by Mrs. Curtis, the wife of Dean Curtis of Lichfield.

Nearly thirty years ago there were some great elms in Brunswick Square, which is about the centre of the city of Bristol; these had been taken possession of by a colony of rooks. This square was built at the time when the old merchants had not yet begun to forsake their dwellings over their offices to go out to homes in the suburbs. On the north side of the square was a chapel, and immediately opposite to this, across the square, a fine old mansion, which had for many years belonged to one of the old Bristol worthies and his descendants. In it, at the time of which we speak, there lived an old lady who had been for many years an

invalid, and who was confined to one room which overlooked the square. To relieve the monotony of her days she always amused herself by watching the people go in and out of chapel; and when the rooks occupied the old elms she observed and noted all their proceedings with great interest, and found that they always returned after the winter—to inspect before rebuilding their nests for the breeding season—on a Sunday. Just after the bells had ceased ringing for morning service, and the congregation had gone into the chapel, the pioneer rook appeared and perched on one of the elms. After peering about and cawing, he hopped on to two or three more trees, and then flew away to return soon with a few more of his companions. These went through the same tactics, until by the time the people had come out from service the whole colony of rooks were in the trees examining their nests of the previous year. The following morning they were busily engaged repairing the old, and building new ones.

The poor lady grieved much when it was decided that the fine old trees were dangerous to the surrounding buildings, and the edict went forth that they were to be cut down and young ones planted in their stead, in spite of many remonstrances from the inhabitants of the houses in the square. So one November, when the rooks had gone away with their young, the work was begun.

The following February, on Sunday morning, the pioneer bird appeared, settled on the ground, gave a disconsolate caw, and flew away; and no rook was ever seen there again, much to the sorrow of their friend in her lonely sick room.

The jackdaw is a compact and lively bird; he aptly proves the truth of the proverb, 'Birds of a feather flock together,' for he flies about with the rooks and feeds with them. He is a pleasing bird to look at as he steps nimbly about; the grey cowl on the back of his head, and his keen, knowing grey eye distinguish him at once from his larger companions. His note is different, and tells that he is with them, even when flying at a distance; it is a sharp chattering 'Jack! Jack!' Where sheep are pastured suits him best as a hunting-ground; he pays them great attention, and performs a useful office for them. I have seen rooks do the same service occasionally, but the jackdaw makes it his business to look after the comfort and welfare of the flock. I have often lingered to watch his proceedings; it is most amusing to see the busy, methodical way in which he sets to work to rid an animal of

its insect tormentors. All over its back and sides he hops and clings, the sheep standing quiet all the time, and knowing perfectly well that what the bird is doing is for its benefit. The animal only stirs when the other sheep have moved on, and then it and the jackdaw go together. The bird finishes off the top part of his woolly courser with the head; first one ear is examined, then the other; even the eyelids are investigated. That being done, he devotes himself to the legs and under parts. Having finished this self-imposed task of sanitary inspection, he flies off to find and comfort another suffering member of the flock.

Much has been written about two African birds with the unmanageable names of *Textor Erythrorhynchus* and *Buphaga Africana*, which attend the game of Africa and give the alarm on the approach of any suspicious object. There is nothing remarkable about that, for close to my own door can be seen rooks, jackdaws, and starlings doing the same thing, and they sound their alarm note in the same manner. If anyone when passing through pasture lands looks about him, he will frequently see horned cattle, sheep, and horses feeding on the same land, and he will see four birds busy feeding in their midst, close to their noses and hoofs, namely, rooks, jackdaws, starlings, and wagtails. On the Surrey and the Southdown hills scores of sheep are saved in one year through the good offices of some members of these four families. Unlike the rook, Jackup prefers to build in the holes of trees. I have watched a pair this season from one of my windows. When breeding-time comes round, they are very quick and sly in their movements. Where chalk is quarried from the hillside for the purpose of lime-making, Jack will build in a crack or cranny, and chatter all day long, the men being busy at work below him. In some localities he will build in a rabbit-hole like a puffin.

As a pet he is well known in the country. A most familiar creature he is, but not of a confiding nature, though towards his master or mistress he is most affectionate, and he takes care to be on the most friendly terms with the children. No meal-time comes round without his making one of their party; he plays with them, and if any mischief is going on, he and they are sure to be equally mixed up in it together. He thoroughly enjoys getting into mischief on his own account too. I have seen him tucked up under a child's arm and borne away without his making the least fuss about it. If any stranger tried to do the same thing with him, their fingers would surely suffer. Jack puts no faith in

anyone outside his own home circle. The cottagers do not clip his wings unless he becomes what they term 'too owdacious' in his tricks, like one of my own that used to make away with one or two tubes of colour, and even my palette knife if the window of my painting-room chanced to be left open whilst I was absent for a few minutes. On my return he would fly up on to the window-sill and stick there; no coaxing would bring him down, and now and again he would remind me he was not asleep by shouting at the top of his voice, 'Jackup! Jackup! Jack-e-e!'



## 'SENTRY GO!'

MANY years ago I was serving as a captain in the 110th Regiment. At the period of my story we were quartered at D —, a fortress of considerable size in the South of England.

In order that the circumstances of the adventure I am about to describe may be understood, I must explain, at the risk of being tedious, that the citadel of the fortress in which my regiment lay is defended by two circles of dry ditches, each about fifty feet wide. The side walls of these ditches, technically known as escarps and counterscarps, are, as was usual in fortifications of that date, rivetted with masonry and are perpendicular. The outer circle ditch is thirty feet deep, the bottom being paved with flagstones. The inner ditch is forty feet deep, and is similarly paved, so that I need scarcely say that a fall from the edge would be almost certainly fatal. The regular approach to the fortress is by a wide road of gradual ascent, so contrived as to be raked by fire from one or other of the bastions or outworks throughout its course. It crosses the ditches over drawbridges, protected by special works of great strength.

In time of war, these drawbridges would be kept raised, and would only be lowered temporarily on urgent occasions. When raised, the fortress would be inaccessible from without, unless scaling ladders were used to cross the ditches. In time of peace, however, the drawbridges are rarely raised, a strong guard, nevertheless, being invariably posted over them.

For the convenience of the officers and certain of the residents in the citadel, there was a short cut which might be used. This was a footpath up the steep side of the cliff, through a strongly guarded postern gate. The path led in zigzag fashion up to the counterscarps of the ditches, which were crossed by light plank bridges, so designed as to be removable with great ease in a few minutes. None but officers quartered in the citadel, and a few persons with special permits signed by the officer commanding the garrison, were allowed to make use of this short cut, the soldiers

<sup>1</sup> The cry invariably used by sentries in the British service to intimate to the guard from which they are detached that, the time of their duty having expired, they expect relief.

and others who had occasion to visit the citadel being restricted to the main approach.

At the time of which I write I had been newly promoted to the rank of captain, and Xerxes himself was not prouder of his vast army than I of my gallant little company. I was lucky as to promotion, and my zeal had not been so damped by long years of subaltern life as to prevent my throwing myself heart and soul into the work of superintendence. I was ambitious to have my company recognised as the smartest in the regiment, and was convinced of the hopelessness of success unless I could inspire my men with the same pride in the company that I had myself. In order to succeed, I felt sure that I should endeavour to become acquainted with the character and disposition of every member of the company, to gain their respect by strict attention to duty, and to earn their affection by constant sympathy and by the affording such help in their amusements or their troubles as a captain frequently has it in his power to give. Since my appointment I had tried to work on this system, and though, of course, I had occasional disappointments, on the whole I had no reason to complain.

For an infantry captain, I was tolerably well off, and, being very fond of outdoor sports, I encouraged cricket and other games by presents of bats, balls, and other materials, and spent much of my time in cricket matches among the men. It was not long before I began to acquire considerable insight into the characters of the men, and learned to distinguish my black sheep *in esse* and *in posse*.

Among the younger men of the company was a lad of the name of Adair Cameron. I had a horror of favouritism, the bad effects of which I had often seen, but it was impossible not to feel a strong interest in this young fellow. Clean and soldierlike in appearance, smart at drill, well set up, and steady as a rock, he was a model of what a young soldier should be. A deadly bowler, he was one of the mainstays of our company's cricketing team, and, as matches were frequent, I saw much of him, and nothing to find fault with. Though I carefully avoided taking undue notice of Cameron, the natural instinct which I think men have to find out their friends and their enemies made me aware that, while I greatly liked him, he, on his side, was warmly attached to me.

One day, a batch of recruits arrived at head-quarters. The adjutant, being away on leave, had got me to do his duties for

him, and I was busy all the afternoon drafting the new arrivals into companies, and arranging for their rations and bedding.

About half an hour before mess I was sitting in my room in the citadel barracks, rather tired, when I heard a knock at the door, and my colour-sergeant appeared.

'Private Cameron wishes to know if he could speak to you, sir,' said he, saluting.

'Certainly,' I replied. 'Tell him to come in.'

Cameron entered, saluted, and stood silent, looking ill at ease.

'Well, Cameron, what is it?' I inquired.

'Please, sir, I wished to speak about something private.'

'Well, what is it?' I asked again.

Cameron hesitated, and looked at the colour-sergeant, who looked straight to his front.

I knew it was not regular for an officer to confer with private soldiers without a non-commissioned officer being present, but I knew Cameron might be trusted thoroughly. I directed the colour-sergeant to wait in the passage, and, closing the door, I asked Cameron to tell me his story. The lad seemed in great distress, and hesitated a great deal before he spoke.

'It's my brother, sir! He's just come in with the batch of recruits.'

With some difficulty he told me his tale, which was to the following effect:—

Private Cameron and a younger brother were the only children of an old widow living in the north of Scotland. The old woman could do little to support herself, and was mainly dependent on the labour of one son and such little help as Private Cameron could send her from savings of his pay. It seemed that some family quarrel had taken place between the widow and her youngest son, and that the latter, in a moment of pique, had enlisted, but had, when too late, repented. He had been drafted to the same regiment as his elder brother, whom he had acquainted with these facts on his arrival in barracks that day. Private Cameron told me, with deep emotion, that nothing could save his mother from the workhouse (an idea which seemed to fill him with shame and horror) unless his brother could be bought out of the service and sent back home.

As his brother had not been three months enlisted, this could be effected by a payment of ten pounds; but such a sum was far beyond the means of either brother. Cameron, in despair, had

come to me for help, hardly daring, as he told me, to hope that I could give it. He said he had been encouraged to seek my assistance by my constant kindness to him.

'I would pay you back, sir, I swear it to you,' said the poor lad earnestly. 'You can stop my pay every week, sir. I want next to nothing. I don't drink any, and I can easy get all I need to smoke and the like o' that. I will pay you back, sir, indeed I will!'

Well, to cut my story short, after some reflection, and not a little misgiving as to whether in respect of discipline I was doing right, I agreed to let him have the money. I could well afford it, I liked the man, and had been touched by his story not a little.

'You should begin to save up your pay in the savings' bank, Cameron,' said I, as he thanked me earnestly.

I had not the least intention of repaying myself from his hard-earned savings, and quite looked upon the loan as a gift, but I judged it better not to say so expressly, lest the easy manner of obtaining the money might do harm, while I thought it a good opportunity of encouraging frugal habits.

Cameron's gratitude was deep, and I could not help feeling that his expression of it was sincere and heartfelt.

As he was leaving the room, he turned—looked me full in the face and said, 'God bless you, sir, for your kindness to me! I shall not forget it! I will repay you sir, so help me, God!'

I was struck by the singular earnestness of the man, and when he had left the room I said to myself, 'I may have done right or wrong, but that is a real good fellow, and I have got a firm friend I verily believe!'

I arranged matters next day. Cameron's brother was permitted to leave for his home almost immediately; my part in the transaction was not suspected, and in a few weeks the matter passed out of my mind. Cameron continued in his steady conduct, and each month I observed that he was putting a little sum to his credit in the regimental savings' bank. I never, however, alluded to the occurrence again. About three months afterwards I went away on short leave. I had accepted a yachting invitation from an acquaintance, and spent a very pleasant three weeks cruising among the Channel Islands.

I returned to D— late one night, and leaving my heavier baggage at an hotel in the town, I started up to barracks with a small handbag.

I went slowly up the zigzag path, through the postern gate, crossed the first or outer ditch, and was within a few yards of the inner one, when I was startled by a sudden challenge—

'Halt! who goes there?'

'Officer!' I answered, feeling not a little surprised, for there had not used to be a sentry over the plank bridge. It was rather dark, and I could not see very distinctly. I advanced a pace or two, when I was again halted.

'You can't pass here! Go back!' I heard in sharp, distinct tones.

This meant a long round for me, which, so late at night, and carrying as I was a heavy bag, was very disagreeable.

'Not pass here!' I exclaimed, peevishly. 'Why not? I am an officer quartered in the citadel!'

'You can't pass! Go back!' repeated the voice, hoarsely.

The tones seemed familiar, and rather irritated by the somewhat peremptory answer, I advanced another pace and saw, close in front of me, a sentry, with his rifle at the port.

'Go back! Go back!' repeated the figure in the same hurried tones.

The night was not so dark but that I could make out the features of Private Adair Cameron. For one moment I thought of inquiring the reason of the road, which was usually open, being closed, but, on second thoughts, I reflected that it was scarcely judicious to enter into an altercation with a sentry whose orders were evidently stringent, so, very sulkily, I turned and began to retrace my steps. I had gone only a few yards when I heard behind me the cry 'Sentry go!' ring through the quiet night air.

The sound lingered in my ears till the echoes from the grey ramparts died away in the still air and all was, once more, profoundly silent. In no very good humour I found myself at last, hot and tired with my burden, in the passage leading to my quarters.

The room occupied by my subaltern was next to mine; the door was open, and I heard voices within.

'Those infernal Sappers are always at some game! They go and move a bridge for some silly reason or other, and never think of telling any one. I only heard about it ten minutes ago, and now I've got to go and post a sentry over it, or some poor devil will break his neck to a moral!'

'You may save yourself the trouble, old boy!' I exclaimed

gaily, as I burst into the room. 'The sentry's on already, and so I've saved my neck, and Evetts there won't get his company just yet!'

The Adjutant (for it was he that had been speaking) and Evetts, my subaltern, greeted me with all the boisterous welcome of old comrades.

'Glad to see you back, old chap!' said Hawes, the Adjutant. 'But what do you mean about the sentry being posted?'

'Why, over the ditch on the short cut, confound him!' I replied. 'He made me go back the whole beastly round!'

'Over the bridge at the inner ditch?' asked Hawes with surprise.

'Yes!' I answered.

'But I haven't posted one yet!' said Hawes. 'I was just going to see about doing it when you came in! For they've taken away the bridge.'

'Well, dear boy, there he is anyway!' I answered laughing.

'But not one of our men?' asked Hawes, in tones of great surprise. 'Surely not one of *our* men?'

'Yes!' I replied, still laughing. 'One of *our* men! I ought to know him too, for it was Private Adair Cameron of my company!'

The two officers looked at each other. A curious expression came over their faces. After a pause my subaltern said slowly, 'Private Adair Cameron died in hospital last night!'



### THE PENNY-FICTIONIST.

It is a good many years ago since the writer was first introduced into the circle of the Upper Five or Six—there cannot really be Ten such superlatively gorgeous circles—by his nurse Fanny. It cannot be said that a formal and personal introduction was ever effected, but Fanny used to leave them lying about—the Upper Five or Six who dwelt between the pages of ‘The London Fictionist.’ The reading probably did the small boy very little harm, and the pleasing familiarity thus gained of the ways and manners of earls and Italian princes may some day prove to be of inestimable value. Dukes and duchesses since then the writer has never met; and all that can be said of them is that if in real life they resemble their namesakes in the pages of ‘The Fictionist,’ his good fortune is great, for their room is much to be preferred to their company. On a renewal of the acquaintance (at the cost of one penny) of these distinguished persons I find them quite unchanged. Like Cleopatra, ‘age cannot wither them, nor custom stale’ their unvarying resemblance.

For the assistance of the inexperienced writer we will mention some of the most salient points of the ducal effigy. He is usually elevated by ‘pride of birth’ and ‘pride of race,’ ‘blue blood,’ ‘long, unsullied descent,’ and so many ‘generations of ancestors,’ that he is lifted far above the common herd; and even his many virtues are so cold and stately that a duke—to be accepted as such by connoisseurs—must perforce be rather monumental than human. Never let your duke talk much, for it is most difficult to keep on so lofty a platform. It is well to remember that the hair of a duke is generally thin—this is supposed to show breed (the penny-fictionist argues from dogs to dukes); his nose is always hooked or aquiline, and, as a rule, his eyelids ‘droop with a calm disdain;’ his face is usually pale, and his hands *must* be long, narrow, and ‘almost of a womanly whiteness.’ Never forget that his instep is arched, because since Anne of Austria made so much fuss about it everybody knows that nobody is anybody whose instep is not shaped like a railway bridge. A duke, too, always ‘wears a star,’ and a good deal is

said about 'the ribbon of his order.' Other degrees of nobility—marquis, earl, viscount, &c.—are obtained by diluting a duke. Duchesses are very much the same as dukes, but they may have a double chin, and it is usually their mouths which 'droop with calm disdain' instead of their eyelids, and they wear their hair in '*bandeaux*,' which a duke, unless a very unusual one, cannot do.

Perhaps of all characters in Penny Fiction the one most likely to be of service to the beginner is the Polished Villain. Of all persons he is the most attractive and popular. He it is whose eyes possess 'such a fatal power;' they are always dark—not 'fathomless,' though; that is a quality always belonging to young ladies in love, and sometimes to young men in a similar condition. The Polished Villain's orbs are always either 'cold,' 'restless,' or 'shifty.' He is dark of hue—indeed, often he is styled a 'brunette' (which is a bold stroke for popular favour); and his nostrils, for some reason or other, must always be descanted upon; certainly they do 'dilate' and 'quiver' a good deal at different periods in the story. Recognising his deserved popularity, the illustrator of these works generally presents the Polished Villain in some striking situation on the first page of the weekly instalment. Even now he is scowling at me from my desk, with his clenched fist pressed to his 'square' chin. Judging from his expansive bosom, this gentleman should be possessed of all the virtues—but he is not. Appearances are deceitful. Look at his 'tiny feet,' and at once you recognise the Polished Villain. Heartless reprobates always have 'tiny feet' in stories of this character, and in the number in which this portrait is given it appears that the P. V. is endeavouring to wed the poor but beauteous lady who figures under the fictitious name of Miss Madeline Redruth, but who is really Lady Ida Somebody, the heiress of two millions sterling, though she does not know it. The gentleman appears to be on the point of success when the instalment ends, but we know he will fail, and that Lady Ida Somebody will quickly become Lady Ida Somebody Else, and enjoy her modest competence in peace.

To be successful the author of these romances must be lavish in bestowing great physical charm upon his characters, and a few words may not be amiss as to the styles that are chiefly in demand. The salient points in the penny-dreadful type of manly beauty are an 'enormous' chest, and a very small, 'almost feminine' waist; the head also must be small, but always marvellously

'chiselled.' (It may incidentally be mentioned that 'close-clipped' hair is now in vogue; flowing and waving locks have quite gone out.) This dainty *cranium* is always 'poised' upon a thick neck, 'suggestive of herculean strength;' the features are intensely classic, and the chin is 'full.' The hands of this delightful being ('though very powerful') are white and small. This is the dark hero. The fair type of paragon, though possessing a chest of equal dimensions, has not so small a waist; he it is who does impossible feats on mountains, whilst his swarthy rival mostly 'lolls on divans.' The fair hero (do not forget 'close-cropped yellow curls') laughs a good deal—he is a sunny creature, and therefore he must have 'superbly' white and even teeth. It is not necessary that his hands should be very white, as he shoots a good deal 'when the wild roses are in bloom,' and does the gentlemanly bucolic. His clothes are 'rough tweeds,' and he always wears gaiters—no, not always; he sometimes sports knickerbockers and stockings, which calls for the remark that his 'limbs' (never legs) are 'shapely.' Although this second type shines best in the field, or in those strange shooting parties in which he joins, he is not half bad in the drawing-room. He 'dons' what is called his 'faultless dress clothes,' and succeeds *à merveille* in 'turning over' the pale heroine's music, but he never waltzes *quite* so well as the small-toed villain. The dancing of that black *à visé* gentleman is generally of the voluptuous order, and is well worth half a column; and the nearly succumbing heroine always 'swoons' as she 'swims.'

Types of beauty vary almost as little in women as in men. There is the simple innocent country maiden who lives with her mother in a thatched cottage, although her lineage is of the most ancient description, and has Saladins, and Paladins, and crusaders, and Heaven knows what else mixed up in it. One knows that she is born to be happy, and will marry great riches, though she will never become titled. By some strange contradiction peeresses must be always 'peerless,' and haughty, and dark, and the country maiden has inevitably 'flossy' golden hair, and a complexion all roses and lilies. To live up to her position and be thoroughly acceptable she must laugh a good deal (dimples *ad lib.*), have a big dog, and must disguise the beauty of her 'slender' foot in the clumsiness of a country-made *bottine* ('as the French say'). In costume this giddy creature mostly affects 'simple' cottons, 'gay'

chintzes, and a sash; her large straw hat is always either carried in her hand or hanging down her back. Then there is the other sort, the tall, stately, dark beauty. She is generally *much* older than the country maiden, being frequently fully twenty; her hair must perforce be 'dusky,' it is sometimes 'raven,' and sometimes 'almost blue.' This lady is generally described as having a 'creamy' skin, and is always pale, which latter fact need surprise no one who reads of the delicate refreshment she alone partakes of, and of the very small amount of exercise she indulges in. No wonder, poor thing, that she swoons and faints so frequently when dancing or otherwise; the marvel is that she is able to endure the hardships she undergoes when the inevitable unworthy suspicion is cast upon her, and the time of her reversal arrives. Her waist—in the excitement of the moment her waist was forgotten, and in truth it is so small that it might almost be omitted entirely—is of the minutest proportions compatible with bare existence; it can 'easily be spanned by the hand,' or hands, it doesn't matter which. Perhaps this accounts for her delicate appetite. Often this lady has the advantage of being willowy as well. It is a wonder she does not snap; probably she will some day, at the point of least resistance, when she 'undulates,' as she is reported to do when she walks. Her eyes are lustrous and soft, but, although she is of the most angelic disposition, they are known at times to flash such fire upon the P. V. as to almost wither him.

We will not touch upon the histrionic genius or the wondrous gift of song that these persecuted willowy ones possess, for that is beyond our power; but we must refer to them, as it is always to the profession of the stage or the concert-room that these talented ladies turn when they find themselves cast penniless upon the world. It is needless to remark, for it is no more than should be expected of them, that they take the first rank from the very beginning. We have known the daughter of a duchess figure as a ballet-dancer, but then she was stolen when young.

As might be anticipated in novels of 'real life,' as these romances are supposed to be, the soldiers and the sailors are very fine and dashing fellows. As a rule they know nothing of ship or barrack life, but that does not matter; their uniforms (which they have been known to wear at an elegant and idyllic haymaking) are just as effective as though they did. The two things necessary for the manufacture of a soldier are great length of limb and a rectangularity of shoulder that would be a deformity in any other type of

human being. This squareness of shoulder must be insisted on, or your hero is no better than a simple Volunteer. This angularity is so pronounced that the heroine in trying moments never 'rests her head' on a soldier's shoulder, but always 'buries her face' on his breast. The Penny-Dreadful soldier, too, is always a sort of Ram Lal; he possesses some mysterious quality that enables him quite successfully to disregard all the 'unities.' We came across one bold penny warrior the other day who valiantly fought 'the Italians at Salamanca;' and the vagaries of Italian patriots who struggled for *la patria* 'under Garibaldi' are almost too marvellous to be swallowed by the greatest glutton for fiction, unless we own at once that they are one and all Esoteric Buddhists.

The sailor is invariably a toothy person—that is to say, he laughs a good deal, and when not laughing has always a 'sunny, boyish' smile 'imprinted' on his face. The whiteness of his 'strong' teeth is always descanted upon, and we have seen them seriously described as being like 'blanched almonds in a brown cake.' Teeth are difficult things to fit with a metaphor. To complete the portrait of a sailor it must always be said that his eyes, whatever their colour, have 'a look of the sea in them,' and his hair must never be straight; he would be no true sailor if his hair did not curl. N.B.—His mother is always a widow. The sailor, too, in these delicious romances is invariably frank and honest, and open as the hand with which he slaps his own thigh and the back of a friend. This honesty, it must be observed, is more especially the property of her Majesty's marine; mere merchant-service sailors (if deserving of the name at all) may swerve a little from the path of virtue. Indeed, it is well to remember that 'the captain of the ship' (who in the weekly illustration never wears anything but a frock coat with a belt, and a cap with a poke to it) generally has a taste for the abduction of damsels. This foible surprises none of the crew, who are perhaps accustomed to it from a long series of voyages, for they seem to regard it as merely an amiable weakness on the part of the skipper. Such intimate knowledge of the mysteries of the infinite main, and of those who go down to the sea in ships, had the talented author of one naval story recently published, that the aforesaid 'captain of the ship' is reported during a storm of unprecedented force and violence to have 'raised, with steady hand, his *binnacle* to his eye.' This was a touch of genius so much appreciated by the illustrator as to be chosen as the subject for the first half-page picture for the week.

In this the captain stood 'on the bridge' (it was a large full-rigged ship) enveloped in a sheet of foam and spray, regarding the immediate onslaught of a stupendous billow through his *binoculars*. For the sake of probability let us hope this was also the author's intention. Yet this gentleman, for all his dangers, ended well; he married a West Indian heiress of great beauty and infinite accomplishments, who had followed him on board in the guise of a cabin boy, and as such seems, during a long voyage, not only to have served, but cooked all the food for the 'captain's cabin.'

There remains one person of the Penny Dreadful still to be spoken of, and he is one of the most useful of all characters to the Penny Dreadful Author; we refer to the detective. The P. D. A. (referred to above) knows that in him he has a sure card to attract the attention of the P. D. Reader. This thrilling creature, whose keen intelligence and quick perception are never deceived except occasionally by the dulness of faithful landladies, or by the stupidity of innocence displayed by the heroine, is of two kinds. He is either the sallow-faced, keen-featured, clean-shaved—these distinguishing qualities always accompany one another—fellow of the Hawkshaw-the-detective type, whose profession is only to be recognised by the ostentatious quietness of his movements and the rapidity with which he winks and blinks his eagle eye upon one and all in his company. We forget, though, this nervous type has quick fidgety motions of his fingers, which 'display the restless energy of his character;' sometimes in moments of bitter disappointment—such as the safe escape of the murderer whom he has tracked up the stairs to the top of the Monument—he has been known to 'bite' (or 'gnaw') his nether lip, while he suppresses all other signs of emotion. This sallow-faced type is the one invariably employed when it is intended that there should be a terrible and sanguinary struggle towards the climax of the story, when the defeated and of course detected villain is entrapped at last, and bound and delivered into the hands of justice (unless he takes poison, as he generally does, to avoid the unpleasantness of so gentlemanly a murderer being tried and hanged) by the patience, cunning, and, ultimately, physical strength of Sallow-face. This type of detective never jokes, he is not expected to be comic; all the funniness has to be done by the other sort.

The second and only other style of detective is the red-faced, jocular, check-trousered species. He 'might be mistaken



for a well-to-do farmer; and, indeed, his tastes are always bucolic, or at least horticultural. But for all his seeming frankness and geniality, he is a very insidious character, and the forger of certificates or the purloiner of diamonds had indeed better beware when once old Redgum is on his track. He has an easy and most fascinating manner of dropping into the most familiar conversation with people on strictly private affairs, and he has a very taking way with housekeepers. He is lavish of half-crowns with grooms, and of kisses with country housemaids, and often wins his way to mysteries by his smile and back-slapping when Sallow-face's hook-nose would instantly create suspicion and distrust. Redgum, too, has a wonderful knowledge of dialect, and is one day a bluff Yorkshireman, the next a dry and humorous Scot, and then a genial brogue-commanding Paddy. A word of warning to the ambitious amateur may here be given: never try to invent another type of detective, for it would not be accepted, and your work would be stamped as unreal.

We ought not, considering how faithfully he does his duty, to forget the heroine's dog, which accompanies her to her tiny lodging when she is reduced from affluence to the direst penury. He shows his wonderful instinct, not only by saving the wavy-haired hero from a watery grave, but by demonstrating in the most uncompromising manner the utmost distaste for one who is apparently 'the most perfect gentleman'—always, be it well understood, in varnished boots; indeed, the P. D. A.'s idea of gentleman is always expressed by polish—shoe polish. We would willingly linger over the many noble qualities of the beast under notice, but he is so well known that it is needless to describe him. Suffice it to say the dog is always a 'hound,' is always faithful, and nearly always 'tawny.' He must be 'huge,' and the heroine, if she be of the fair-haired, chintz, or cheap mourning species, is constantly kneeling on the floor, and has her arm round his neck. The tall, blue-haired heroine cannot be so childish; the expression of her emotions is much more tragic, and consists in having a skin of 'pale ivory,' in her hairpins coming out, and in 'clinchings' her white hands. To finish with the dog, whose name is Leo if the hero does not happen to be called the same, his ears are of velvet, he has most expressive eyes, and is of the utmost value for the heroine to confess her love to, quite aloud, and to be overheard by the secreted and ardent Cyril. He has many confidences whispered into his 'soft' ear, and notwithstanding his faithful-

ness these confessions always seem to become known to the right person.

On the whole, innovations are resented by the P. D. R., but we observe that one-armed men have been very popular of late in Penny Fiction, but then the odd limb is of supernatural strength, and can 'snatch her' (the usual she) out of the most imminent peril like winking, so that after all a second member would be almost superfluous. There is much pathos always expended on the way in which 'the empty sleeve' is pinned upon the stalwart, heroic, herculean '(it is all these) chest, and an interesting passage given as to the manner in which the soldier in question lost his 'sword arm;' which arm, by the bye, must have been the left one, as the maimed hero generally dances a great deal, and 'encircles her slender waist' with the one—presumably the right—which remains. One-legged men are not so popular, probably because to loop up one empty trouser and hitch it to his waistcoat would not sound so romantic. Besides, one-legged men are always rascals who have received this punishment as a 'judgment' for their many crimes, and are doomed to hop and hobble through all the last chapters of the story as some slight retribution required by the Penny-Dreadful sense of poetic justice.

There are many other well-known and unvarying species we might speak of had we the necessary space. The gipsy is a sure card, with her 'elf-locks' and mystery, and the pedlar and the always excellent cheap-jack; the tattooer might be referred to, for he is a person of importance, but his work has generally been done years before the action of the story, and he is only mentioned in a general way—at least he only appears in the Prologue. Then there is the lawyer who rubs his hands, the 'dear old housekeeper,' the buttons (a comic boy), and the family cook. The doctor might be descanted upon, or the typical tradesman—a poor creature this, and much looked down upon by author and reader alike: perhaps we may some other time; we know them well, and, bless you, they won't change.

### SUCH A FOOL!

HE was always a fool—Tom Lake—and we always were telling him so,

But where was the harm in that? It was just as well he should know.

And he didn't mind it a bit—not he—or but once in a way—

Vex him? I think that he liked it? What else *would* one think here to-day?

We'd a holiday given last week, and we walked—d'ye see it, the mill

A-twirl like a fly on a pin? But that morning its sails stood still. Well, just below it, the lane and the railroad meet. Some deserve

To be hung for that level-crossing, not twenty yards from the curve.

And there, as we came to the place where we saw the smooth metals a-shine,

The mill folks' bit of a child, that's blind, had strayed down on to the line,

And had lost itself, and got frightened—it couldn't have told you why;

It owns little enough to lose, since it's lost both the earth and sky.

But to see it crying there, in the dark, with its curls in the sun, Made you feel like a sort of fool—only *feel*, for you'll hear *I* was none.

It's hardly three year old, and it's blind: anyway, no better it knew

Than to stand right between the two rails, with the Western Mail just due.

Due? No! but thundering round with a whirl and a clank and a screech

Down on her—down on them both—for Tom somehow had rushed within reach,

And had tossed the child safe on the bank, and got knocked down dead for his pains,

Killed on the spot, with a fractured skull. Well, well, if he'd had more brains,

He'd maybe have stopped to consider—*we* did, as you'll please remark—

Before he dashed out of the light, to leave the child here in the dark.

Yet we didn't call him a fool when we picked him up. There's no need

To be telling a lad the truth, when he hasn't the sense to heed.

And I don't think Fool's the word we'll get carved on yon slab of a stone,

Though he *was* such a fool—oh aye, *such* a fool as I've seldom known.

*FRENCH JANET.*

## CHAPTER XVI.

BROAD DAYLIGHT AGAIN, WITH THE BALL AT WINDYGATES, AND  
FIRST-FOOTING AT THE HAUGHS.

WINDYGATES gave his ball as he had elected, and the waterside came, sure enough, danced in the great barn, and ate of the good things in the dining-room, in the teeth of all the gibbering ghosts in and out of Christendom. Neither were there bad results from the audacious proceeding beyond the usual aching limbs, fits of indigestion, small spites, and larger pangs of disappointed hopes and blighted loves, apt to follow on such festivities given in the most favourable circumstances. If there was a considerable amount of clutching at partners' arms and subdued screeching on the part of couples crossing the moonlit farmyard which intervened between the candle-lit house and barn, that was as much due to irreverent horse-play and coquettish airs as to any honest ground of alarm. The noise and commotion, the company and the merry-making, scared the bogle in place of being scared by it.

Only one man's face clouded over, and his heart reproached him more and more as the night sped, and, strange to say, the face and heart belonged to Windygates, the giver of the feast. Young Windygates and the heiress of the Haughs had so much to say to each other still, though they had been dwelling in the same house for a period of weeks, and danced together so often, even to the neglect of their respective duties to their neighbours, and at the risk of drawing down universal comment and speculation, that the host felt bound to interfere and call these foolish young folks to order, though the hostess took the little imprudence coolly and quietly enough, only remarking in a benign, vague way that lads and lasses would be lads and lasses, and allowance must be made for their inclinations.

'I have a word to say to you, my dear,' announced Windygates, preventing young Windygates from leading up Maisie to another country dance, and offering her, instead of the son's arm, the father's, in its broad sleeve sprinkled a little with the powder

shaken from his wig, to lead her to a promenade behind the rows of dancers.

‘With all my heart, sir,’ answered Maisie with right good will, and without a shade of blushing. ‘Good day to you, Allan, go and get another partner. You know I prefer a solid sensible talk with a man come to the years of discretion, like your father, to dancing with a young man like you, any day.’

‘I know,’ said Allan, for it was a well-established fact that, if Maisie, with her beauty, her sprightliness, and her broad acres, was in favour with the young men, she was in still greater favour with their fathers and uncles, and that she put the utmost value on the regard of her elders, and had a genuine relish for their improving conversation. ‘I know,’ repeated Allan, ‘and I commend your good taste, but I’ll have my dance yet,’ and he departed with unabated confidence in search of another partner, as she had bidden him.

Windygates looked wistfully at them both: at the girl first. Her figure was still slim and undeveloped, but in the delicately moulded bust and slenderly rounded throat, and in the carriage of the shapely head, there was a great promise of stateliness and dignity in the years to come. She was only a lowland laird’s daughter: she would probably never be anything better than a lowland laird’s wife. She was not above the middle size, but, like little Lady Windygates and the great proportion of the matrons on the Deerwater, she was born to command rather than to obey. Not one of them had more of the attributes of a queen, although she was only a princess as yet, than Maisie Hunter of the Haughs possessed. She wore one of those dim and faint-coloured brocades—any vestige of which is a delight to the present generation—and it set off admirably her pure vivid colour and her strongly contrasting traits. Her wealth of dark hair was flung back on what was seen of her modestly veiled bosom and white shoulders in such long soft curling locks as might have afforded an excuse for an enamoured Lord Petres treacherously despoiling another Miss Arabella Fermer. Among Maisie’s locks, just above one temple, there nestled a white rose, like a snowball. It was not an ivory rose on this occasion; it was a real sweet-smelling, perishing rose, matching the cluster which she wore instead of a breast knot. It was still the depth of winter, but even in those days of limits and restrictions there were such things as nurseries and greenhouses in connection with the large towns, and some-



body had taken a great deal of trouble and been at considerable expense in order to get those roses for Maisie Hunter, which she alone of all the belles at the Windygates ball was able to display—with a sensation far sweeter than that of mere girlish vanity. Maisie's head was a little thrown back, her hazel eyes were shining, her red lips were slightly apart, affording a glimpse of the pearly teeth between, in the height, not of ungentle arrogance, but of frank gladness; not a rose that blossomed in June was fresher and fairer than Maisie, with a fragrance which would linger when the rose leaves were withered and shed.

Windygates looked next at young Windygates in the braw green uniform of the county hunt, gold-laced and satin-lined. He was half a head taller than most of the men standing by. He bore himself with a certain ease and grace which were recent acquisitions, and held his head well, with the high hope and grateful acknowledgment of a man who recognises, in all manly loyalty and humility, that he has a goodly heritage beyond his deserts. The hue of health was returning to his cheek, and he was further flushed with happy resolution and the sense of victory. Any father might have been forgiven for looking upon such a son as a fine young fellow, with whom he did well to be satisfied. But Windygates hardly repressed a groan of perturbation as he gazed first on Maisie Hunter and then on his heir, and could have cursed his own shortsightedness and selfishness. He was pacing, with Maisie, the not too smooth floor behind the dancers, and passing without heed the rat-holes in the rough walls and the brown worm-eaten ends of the 'cupples' or beams which supported the roof. Between the beams and the tiles above them gusty draughts and straggling white rays of the moon fell on the absorbed dancers, the last disputing with the red light of the candles the dusky corners of the improvised ball-room.

'Maisie,' said Windygates, in brief earnestness, as was his fashion, 'I owe you the restoration of my son.'

She looked round at him without any abatement of her gladness—on the contrary, with a deeper joy in her quickening steps and brightening eyes.

'You are very good, sir, to say so and think so,' she told him quickly, 'but you are wrong, though I know there are people who agree with you—young Windygates himself among the rest. Still you are wrong, for the very good reason that you had not lost your son,' and here a little ring of indignation came into her voice.

The Bristol diamonds of one of her shoe-buckles flashed out from beneath her dress as she put down her small foot emphatically. She drew herself up, and her breast heaved in the character of a person who defends another unjustly accused. 'Windygates, how could you think your son was lost, when he never gave you just cause to blame him, and never ought to have cost you a sigh in his life?'

'Well, that is true,' granted Windygates slowly. 'I should have considered that and taken comfort from it; I suppose I wanted some one like you to put it boldly and kindly before me ere it came home to me. Another thing, Maisie Hunter, you are the daughter of my trusty old friend Davie Hunter of the Haughs, with whom I spent many a happy day when we were brisk callants together, ay, and after we were mature men and he had to bury your mother.'

'I am pleased that you and my father were such friends,' said Maisie softly, 'but you say it reproachfully, sir; I hope you do not see any falling off in me,' she added with a laugh, 'that makes me unworthy of falling heir to the friendship.'

'No, it is not that,' he said hastily and impatiently, as if her laugh was out of tune with his thoughts; 'nor is it that I am your oldest guardian, unless that it behoves me still more to see, lassie, that no ill befalls you which I can keep away—above all, no ill through me and mine.'

'Why, what ill should happen to me—especially through you who are among my oldest and best friends, as you have just reminded me?' protested Maisie, with seeming ingenuousness.

But Windygates was full of his own trouble rather than attending to her.

'I could not face your father in another world, I could not face your Auntie Peggy in this. What would your other guardians think, what would the world say, if I permitted a bit lassie's good nature and generosity to be taken advantage of, in my own house, too?'

'You are speaking in riddles now, Windygates,' said Maisie, with a suspicion of laughter in her voice, for she was full of mirthfulness in those days, as she was full of spirit and determination. 'As to what my guardians would think of anything that happened to me, I beg leave to remind you all that I shall soon be of age, when I will take my fate and fortunes into my own hands and relieve you of your heavy responsibility. In the meantime, what

should happen here in your own house? You are none of you going to rob and murder me, I hope.'

'There are more robberies than those of sillar and more murders than the crimes that let out human lives,' said Windygates grimly. 'There are robberies of peace and quiet, and murders of rest and trust.'

'Your riddles are harder to read than ever,' declared Maisie obstinately.

'I'm giving no riddles,' insisted Windygates with some exasperation. 'I'm a plain-spoken man, and desire to speak plainly, though I would fain spare a lassie's blushes. Maisie, I should have spoken and acted long before now, but I did not think of this—I swear to you, not of late days, though at an earlier date, it was the dearest wish of his mother's heart and mine, and none could have said then that the match was unequal. When things were changed I was swallowed up in the relief which had come to us by your means, poor, fearless, fatherless lassie! and I have behaved as if I had neither heart nor honour, as if I were blind and doited, which in truth I was. I do not know what has been passing between you and young Windygates during these last few weeks; I hope and pray nothing that will prevent you from parting and forgetting in a month or less. But mind, if there has been any thought of love passages, I forbid them, Maisie Hunter. It shall never be with my will that you're ever "cried" with young Allan in Deerholms Kirk.'

She was blushing scarlet as he had predicted, but she turned round and faced him with her open forehead and clear eyes, in which there was neither deceit nor cowardice.

'And why not, Windygates?' she asked calmly. 'I do not say that there have been love passages, and I do not question your right to forbid them whether in the past or future; I only ask you to be so good as to explain your meaning after you have gone, so far as to speak of this to me in your own house.'

'Because,' said Windygates desperately, 'my son is no longer a fit husband for you or any other happy, untroubled young woman. She has a right, when she entertains a purpose of marriage, to look forward to a home in which at least all is straightforward and above board, and there is no secret, no shadow, to come between her and her man to drive them asunder and hold them apart, till their mutual affection is chilled to death, if it be not converted to hate. It can never be right with young Windygates and any wife that

he may get. In my opinion he had better let marriage alone, though our family is bound to be a barren stock and our branch of the race to die out of existence. A hantle better that than to drag some wretched lass into the thick of his troubles and crush her with the weight of them.'

'But what has young Windygates ever done that he should be condemned to a single state?' demanded his champion in accents somewhat icy in their severity.

'Done! I do not know that he has done anything, my poor laddie,' exclaimed the father, his heart melting again, 'except maybe to show himself a little weak and witless—which is not to be wondered at when his years are taken into account. It is not what he has done; it is that, in some mystery of the Lord's ways, which do not always spare the innocent and punish the guilty—that we must nevertheless accept without complaint, for what are we to murmur and cry out?—Allan Windygates has become the sport of an evil spirit; the one man of his generation, of many generations, who is unlike the lave, who sees and hears things which are not for them to see and hear—a ghost-seer, spectre-ridden—I had as soon he were in a mad-house—far sooner he were in his quiet grave,' Windygates cried with repressed passion.

'Oh! hush, hush, sir,' protested Maisie vehemently; 'and why do you bring all this back to-night when everybody else had forgotten it? We were so blithe and thankful. It is not right. Where is your gratitude for God's goodness to you and your trust in Providence? Allan is free, free; all his misery is past and gone like a tale that is told. You and his mother—all about Windygates—is its old self again.'

'For the present,' said Windygates doggedly; 'but who can tell how long it will last? What has been may well be again. I tell you, Maisie, I am not ungrateful for the mercies sent to me. I do not refuse to put my trust in Providence. God help us, what else have we to trust in when it is not the quick, but the dead, who assail us? I am resigned so long as the risk is confined to young Windygates and his folk, but I will not permit a third person to share it. It shall never be with my consent that a young lass so imperils her happiness.'

'And what if—if the lass has come to care for Allan in the fashion you have referred to?' inquired Maisie with a scarlet flame in her cheeks once more.

'Then she must forget him as soon as may be,' said Windy-

gates resolutely. 'Better a finger off than one eye wagging. She must take up with some other swain and let him put poor young Windygates out of her head as quickly as he can.'

She turned upon him with fiery scorn. 'Windygates, who and what gave you your poor opinion of women?' she challenged him on the spot.

'Me!' exclaimed the unlucky gentleman, thunderstruck at the accusation brought against him on the spur of the moment. As he spoke he stopped short in his amazement and raised his voice till the dancers turned their heads and looked at the couple. 'Me! when had I a low opinion of women? Is it like it, when at this moment I am sacrificing my own interests and the interests of those dearest to me in order to protect one of the sex who I thought would have been reasonable, but I begin to misdoubt it? Does that look like undervaluing women?'

'Yes,' said Maisie undauntedly, 'if you think that they would not go through fire and water for those they care for—in that way; if you believe that the women would not count it their highest happiness to greet with some men sooner than laugh with others. What do you think true love means if it is not that? Oh! Windygates, I'm vexed for you. I'm vexed for Lady Windygates if after all the years you've lived together that is all you know of it,' and there was a mixture of withering sarcasm and indignant regret in the girl's voice.

'We're man and wife,' said Windygates, a trifle offended, 'and there can be no question of separation between us—I would like to hear it mooted to her!' Then his eyes twinkled and moistened at the same time, and he gave a shrug of his broad shoulders, which expressed partly dry amusement at the partner of his life, partly sturdy pride in her. 'I would like to see mischief come near me, and my lady not in the thick of it—by preference. I mind when young Windygates was an infant, and she was very full of her son and heir, there was word that I might be drawn into Lathones's trouble—not that I was ever with him in politics, but he was an old neighbour, and I had sought to screen him, without meaning any treason against his Majesty—did she not up and pack a valise for herself, on the instant, and prepare to leave the bairn and go with me over the water into exile?'

'Well, sir,' said Maisie loftily, 'what she did, you may believe that others would do—you may give them credit for it, at least till they're called on to make their words good.' Then she abated

a few jots of her dignity and laughed again. 'I'll promise you this, Windygates, to keep your mind easy and your conscience clear: nothing of the kind you allude to—no plighting troths and exchanging lovers' vows, against your will—shall happen in your house, whatever may take place in mine. I'll not defy your authority as my guardian, nor will young Windygates fly in his father's face without giving you fair warning. For anything farther'—she was once more as grave as an inspired young judge, thrilled with the sincerity and depth of her conviction—'if I cared for a man, especially if he were as innocent as the babe unborn, neither the heights of the sky, nor the depths of the earth and the sea—no, nor, God helping me, the devils in hell itself—would hinder me from standing by his side and taking the half of his tribulation on my shoulders.'

Maisie kept her word in this—that, though young Windygates had his dance, he had no more—neither that night, nor during the one or two additional days which passed before she returned to the Haughs.

Lady Windygates was disappointed to see her cousin go without anything being settled with regard to the alliance that should connect the two families more closely than ever. She had to bear her disappointment in silence, for she had an instinct that she would receive but dubious sympathy from Windygates, while in the case of young Windygates the time had not come for speaking.

But, though Maisie was gone and there was no farther chance for the present of daffing and dallying within the walls of Windygates, what was to hinder words much to the purpose being spoken during the performance of the guisards' mask, which Maisie saw and listened to both at the Haughs and in other houses on the Deerwater—above all, on that conspicuous occasion when young Windygates went first-footing in the keen frost of the starry night which heralded the grey dawn of the new year? In common humanity, every house was open to the joyous guests who went thronging the roads hard as ice at the mystic hour when the night and the morning meet. Even Auntie Peggy refused with much spirit to go to bed on the last night of the year, saying that she had not slept the new year in within her remembrance, and that it was too late to begin. Besides, she expected some old beaux of her own to stretch their shrunk shanks in order to salute her on the only night in the year when they were privileged to take the liberty, and wish her a good new year.



Sure enough, in the general merry-making, the shouting and singing, which extended from garret to basement, when every ploughman and servant lass, as well as their masters and mistresses, drank to each other's health from their respective vintages, and exchanged and ate their 'singing-cakes,' their slices of bun, and 'dads' of short-bread, two or three jolly old gentlemen, ranked by their descendants in the third generation, well wrapped up in greatcoats and cravats, gallantly braved the night air for the opportunity of being 'first foot' to their old acquaintance Auntie Peggy. They unearthed their hooked noses and lantern jaws from their comforters, took the lady by the tips of her shrivelled fingers, and exchanged with her the politest of salutes. They cracked ancient jokes, capped her old stories with stories, nearly as remote in their occurrence, of their own, and thoroughly agreed with her that the 'daft days' were not half so daft as they had been when the speakers were young, and that there were no times like the old times, which had fled

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Within the same house it was the most natural thing in the world for Sibbie Gordon and Lieutenant Jamie to do as they would be done by, and leave a young pair to themselves. It was equally natural for young Windygates to press Maisie Hunter with the apposite questions where and with whom was she to spend the new year, and all the years to come in her life; and for her to slip her little hand in his, look up in his face all afire with eagerness, and reply, for reasons which they both understood thoroughly, with less coyness and twitting of his earnestness than she might otherwise have been betrayed into—

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had not lost a niece, but gained a nephew to guard her against all the hosts of guisards, landloupers, and gangrels for the rest of her days.

What did Auntie Peggy care for what became of herself, particularly when it was clear from Maisie Hunter's behaviour that a poor old body would be far better out of the way than forced to stay and see what she could not bear to look upon, and yet had no power to prevent?

'You're clean demented, Maisie,' represented Auntie Peggy bitterly, 'you who might have had the pick and choice of the brawest lads on the water.'

'I have chosen,' said Maisie proudly, 'and Allan Windygates is the brawest lad I see.'

'See, see,' repeated Auntie Peggy petulantly. 'Oh, aye, as far as sight goes there is nothing to complain of. But you may please your eyes to plague your heart, madam, and there are more kinds of sight than simple seeing; there's second sight, with which some are cursed. None that is wise will tamper either with it or with them that have it. A man who has to do with spirits and visions, who has brought them to a respectable, peaceful country place, where no such dishonest ferlies were ever heard of—not since Mattie Macphail gave her silly man the brood of puddock-stools to help him cannily out of the way, and from the moment he drew his last breath he never left her side, neither at kirk nor market! They said she could not sit down to rest in her big chair without finding him there before her. It makes my very flesh creep to think of your having anything to do with young Windygates. He's as bad as the Witch of Endor, or Major Weir, or John-a-Dreams,' cried Auntie Peggy, jumbling up her similes in the wildest, most outrageous manner.

'Auntie Peggy, do not distress yourself,' said Maisie, pursuing much the same tactics that she had adopted with success on a former occasion. 'If you forbid me absolutely to marry my Allan, I'll not disobey you, for you are all the father and mother I've known, and you've been so good to me that I've never missed them. I owe you a child's duty, and I'll pay it. But I'll never wed another man so long as I live. I'll die unwed for his sake, whether or not he remain a bachelor for mine. For anything I care, the Haughs may go to those cousins of my father's whom you never could abide, and would not have here because you said they were not fit for decent company.'



## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE ARRIVAL OF THE PICTURE.

THE opposition of Windygates and Auntie Peggy was borne down. Is it wonderful when one sees the solid objections which are surmounted every day when Love leads the way? And, between ourselves, Windygates and Auntie Peggy, whatever they might profess, or even believe they felt, were not sorry to be overpowered.

All was going merrily. The depth of winter was past, spring was at the door—the late ‘snell’ spring of the north, which came reluctantly even to the Haughs, where, nevertheless, there were catkins and primroses beneath the leafless hawthorns in April. But up at Windygates and Braehead the gales were still boisterous, tearing and tossing the few alders and beeches and the gnarled fir trees. Not a flower showed itself—except the pinched clumps of crocuses in Lady Windygates’s garden, which came long after crocuses were out of fashion in more genial localities, and a courageous little gowan or two, opening their shrivelled petals to the sun, which, now that Candlemas had come back some time ago, peeped in a more friendly way over the eastern hill-top and hung red over the western before its setting. The days were lengthening and lengthening. There were young calves, young lambs, and young chickens in the world, which was still so cold with a lingering feeling of snow in the air. Yet summer was coming with its brief golden brightness and balmy breath.

Before the summer young Windygates and Maisie Hunter were to be cried in Deerholms Kirk, in spite of Windygates’s prohibition—notwithstanding their friends’ serious misgivings.

Maisie’s providing—a much more substantial affair than a modern young lady’s trousseau—was all ready. She was paying her last visit to Windygates before the marriage, in order to give her opinion on some alterations and improvements which had been projected in the house. For the present she and her bridegroom, with Auntie Peggy to keep them company, were to stay at her own house of the Haughs, but it was held right—a fitting compliment to the future Lady Windygates—that she should be consulted henceforth on all proposed changes at Windygates, and Maisie had never up to this date been ‘backward’ in giving and enforcing an opinion.

Young Windygates had been walking with his bride all over the place. He had remarked that he was afraid she would miss some day her sheltered early garden, everything was so exposed and late at Windygates; 'and oh, Maisie, if you had seen the sheaves of lilies and the branches of chestnut in blossom brought in from the adjacent country to deck Madame the Duchess's room in her hotel in Paris for one day!' he ended wistfully.

She looked at him quickly. 'I'm content, sir, if you are,' she told him. Then she showed him the red shoots on the low wilderness of prickly rose bushes, and reminded him how Windygates looked when the lower slopes of the braes were in a blue mist of harebells, while the higher ridges were purple with the sunset light of the blooming heather, when the bracken was golden-brown, and the lichens and moss on the grey stones orange and apple-green beneath the hunter's moon. She was sure there was nothing fresher and more glorious in Paris, in all France, in all Europe; and he assented warmly.

Many boxes and packages were arriving constantly at Windygates and the Haughs in those days, to the general excitement and enthusiasm of the respective households. Young Windygates and Maisie were not astonished, when they went into the house, to find another square box in the hall. Neither were they scandalised to see not only Windygates and Lady Windygates, but Jenny and Ailie, Ritchie and Pate—all the subordinates who could be collected on a short notice—hovering in the background, on the alert to inspect the box's contents. Did it contain the pier-glass for Lady Windygates's parlour, or the new weather-glass Windygates had ordered to replace the old one in the dining-room, which mocking tongues alleged he had dinged to pieces in order to compel it to return more favourable answers to his inquiries after the weather; or was it the hanging shelves for young Windygates's room? The box looked too small to contain some of these things, but no doubt what it held would deserve inspection.

Windygates had been about to press the lid open with the kitchen axe when his eye caught the full address. 'It is for you and not for me,' he said, handing Allan the axe; 'you had better open it yourself, and let Maisie see what you've been ordering.'

'I have not the faintest guess what it can be,' said young Windygates, at the same time kneeling down with alacrity to do the job transferred to him. 'Can you call to mind, Maisie, anything else we've thought of and sent for?'

'No,' she said, after a slight pause, 'and it strikes me this is a foreign box.'

He started at the words, and had nearly dropped the axe. He stopped in what he was doing to examine the address anew. It was written distinctly enough in the running Italian handwriting, which was then nearly universal among women of the upper ranks, so that anybody catching a glimpse of the characters might easily think he or she had seen them before, and struggle to name the particular person to whom to assign them. 'Alain Wedderburn younger of Windygates, Roxburgh, Scotland.' Could the writer be Lady Lathones, who had plenty of foreign boxes in her garret? No, the A and the W were not Lady Lathones's letters. Besides, there was the 'Scotland,' as if the sender of the box had been forth of Scotland when it was sent. Another thing, the christian name 'Allan' wanted an l and had an i, and was really the foreign version 'Alain.'

Young Windygates's colour went and came, and he began to bungle his work. Yet there would be nothing so very wonderful in the circumstance if his former friend the Duchess de Chalons, who might have heard through Lady Lathones the news of his intended marriage, had graciously despatched to her young squire, her *fil*s by adoption, a wedding gift—and yet—and yet—

His strong fingers trembled so that he could hardly finish his task; he kept fumbling with the lid after the nails were loosened, till his agitation was not only manifest, it became infectious, and communicated itself to the onlookers.

Lady Windygates took a step forward, but Maisie Hunter anticipated her.

'Let me open the box, Allan,' she said. She first lifted the lid with a hand which did not hesitate or tremble, and then raised a screen of canvas, revealing the full-length portrait of a woman, young and handsome, black-browed and black-haired. She wore in her likeness a turned-up hat, mantle, and *fichu*—the like of which had not been seen on the Deerwater—and there was the representation of a wealth of delicate lace bordering the hat, hanging from the sleeves, which reached to the elbow, and the gloves meeting the sleeves, round the fan which was in one hand, trimming the mantle row upon row, edging the sweep of the train.

Young Windygates sprang to his feet and staggered back, reeling against his father as if the young man had received a pistol-shot.

There was a suppressed cry of horror, in which all present

seemed to join, for everybody knew in an instant, without the necessity of being told, the original of the picture. Indeed, Ailie and Pate, covering their faces, cowered and fled, crying wildly, 'Tak' it awa' for mercy's sake, for the love of God. It is it. It is her. Oh, cover it up. Dinna look again. Burn it, bury it, if you would keep your life and reason.' Sure enough, Ailie, strong servant girl though she was, fell down in a dead faint the next moment. It did not want Braehead, who came in by the open hall door just then, and was led to join the group, to cry out, in amazement and discomfiture, 'Good Lord! it is the likeness of Madame St. Barbe. How did that picture come here? Who sent it?' There was no occasion for the inscription in one corner, just above the frame, 'Jeannette Renée St. Barbe, née de Chalons.' The identity of the original was established without farther proof.

The single word of the inscription, which was familiar to the popular eye, and the salient feature of the dress, which the artist had faithfully given, were caught up and reproduced in popular names—plain-spoken in their graphicness, like most definitions of the kind, peculiarly plain-spoken to be bestowed on a ghost. They have remained attached to the shade, throughout its connection with the house of Windygates, down to the present generation. 'Jean or Janet?' a puzzled matter-of-fact woman's voice had been heard to ask, 'she must have been a French Janet.' 'Eh, but she had been unco fond o' pearlins,' said another. And 'pearlins' have continued one of poor Jeannette St. Barbe's distinctions in death as in life. She has been 'French Janet' or 'Pearlin Jean' to the household at Windygates, and the world without, from that hour.

Lady Windygates took advantage of the commotion caused by Ailie's fainting fit to call the domestics to order and dismiss them summarily to their respective duties, though the matron's own face was like ashes, and it was with difficulty that she could keep her tongue from cleaving to the roof of her mouth.

'What's all this steer about? That silly tawpie Ailie fainted for fright; what business had she to faint or to be frightened, any more than to faint? Carry her out, Ritchie, and take a watering pan to her, that will bring her to her senses fast enough; and you, Pate, you are as bad as she to stand glowerin' in at the door, as if you had seen a worrie cow and were a born idiot to boot. Jenny, if the water fail to rouse her, you'll burn feathers under her nose, and if that will not do drop the big barn-key down her back after

you've cut her laces. There is nothing to stand idling and gaping about; you ought to be ashamed of yourselves—mind your proper work, and let prying and gossiping alone.'

The assembly dissolved at the indignant remonstrance. Ailie, already beginning to moan, sob, and kick, in the hands of the sturdy bearer, was carried out, and the family, with the addition of Maisie and Braehead, left to themselves.

Young Windygates, with a gesture of despair, and a low, bitter cry, 'It is no use,' quitted the room before anybody could stop him.

'I telled you so,' said Windygates with a groan, unable in the midst of his distress to help uttering the reminder.

Lady Windygates looked anxiously at Maisie, who stood grave and silent for a space. But she did not faint or scream, or even put her handkerchief to her eyes, and her fine colour flushed up instead of paling away.

Braehead stooped, and examined the picture critically, as became a philosopher. 'These are honest paint and canvas,' he said, touching them with his fat forefinger tentatively and carefully, a little as one in later times might handle a box suspected of containing dynamite. 'The picture is well painted. If it is done by spirits, they employ good genuine pigments and are by no means behind in their trade. The likeness does them credit. I can vouch for its being striking; nobody could mistake it.'

Yes, truly, there were the magnificent eyes, a fortune in themselves, half languishing, half coquettish, with their bold yet crafty glance; the marked brows, the straight nose, the red lips, the brunette richness of complexion, the tall figure, the haughty pose of the head, the picturesque dress, with its profuse adornment of costly lace—Madame St. Barbe, 'Pearlin Jean,' as she had been in the body, when Braehead had last seen her recklessly poisoning herself, with one little foot planted on the wheel of the travelling coach, before she was thrown down in the public street, in the block of traffic at the city gate, trampled under foot by the horses' hoofs, ground by the heavy wheels, and dragged out, smeared with blood and mud, every noble, dainty trait blotted out by a cruel death. And just so had she been seen weeks and months afterwards, and described many a time, by the ghost-seers at Windygates.

Windygates raised the picture, in spite of the mystery attached to it and to the original, rested it against the wall, looked it all over, slowly and fixedly, said again, 'I telled you so,' and retreated into the background.

Lady Windygates came forward and looked. She had wept when she was first told of the miserable fate of this woman, crushed out of existence as one brushes aside a noxious insect—the woman who had known young Windygates, and befriended him when he was sick and helpless, and his mother was not by to do with her own hand everything he wanted done, and grudge each service rendered to him by another. But the mother wept no longer. How could she mourn for the evil being who was working her relentless, unrighteous vengeance on young Windygates and all belonging to him? Lady Windygates looked again wistfully at Maisie, and not the picture, and would have drawn the girl's arm through hers. But Maisie without any discourtesy declined the support, and stood erect and independent, staring at the representation of her rival, who, living or dead, stood between her and Allan Wedderburn. It was then, and not till then, that the hue of Maisie Hunter's cheeks began to change from the hue of a carnation to that of a lily—still it was that of a lily unbroken, undrooping as yet, sufficient for herself and her lover.

Braehead broke the silence. He spoke with his natural materialism and his invincible incapacity for any sentimental or imaginative consideration of a question. 'It might be,' he said with deliberate argument, 'that Madame St. Barbe, poor body, had got her picture painted, let us say for a surprise to—to one or other of her lovers. I have no doubt,' he put in apologetically, 'that she had scores. You can see for yourselves that she was very well favoured, a fine woman, aye, and a cunning jade if ever woman was. Or it may be she had the picture done simply to please herself, for we have no sound ground to go upon anent her motive, and where there is no proof there ought to be no dogmatism. But suppose the picture done and ready to hand before her fatal accident, it is within the bounds of credibility, I say again, that some of her folk—the Chalons cattle—may have forwarded it to young Windygates on hearing of his approaching marriage—or without hearing of it, for the arrival of the picture at this time may be a chance coincidence. There is no knowing what their intention may have been. They may have sent the picture with no thought save to do young Windygates a kindness, since they were aware he was well acquaint with their deceased kinswoman, who had rendered him signal service. Or they may have sent it in grim retaliation for his share in her death, or as a sorry jest. But,' Braehead went on to admit candidly, 'I must confess the



handwriting of the address bears a resemblance to her writing out of the apothecary's prescriptions as they came under my notice, though that could not be. Depend upon it, my first surmise was the correct one, unless Madame St. Barbe in her lifetime not only had her picture painted, she had it also put up, and addressed it herself as a surprise to young Allan. In the meantime it has been lying waiting, forgotten perhaps, till her kindred found a convenient opportunity to have it forwarded. The idea of the direction being in her handwriting is not to be entertained otherwise. I put it to you, how could fingers stiff and cold, even if they were out of a coffin, grasp a pen and write? or how could a spirit without fingers use the pen, ink, and paper of mortals? The supposition would be monstrous, and worse than the merest child's folly.'

'He may be right,' said Lady Windygates eagerly. She was not wont to agree with Braehead's cool, elaborate reasoning, but she could not hide her desire to be of one mind with him on the present occasion. 'There may be really nothing wrong about the picture, forby the fact that it was a piece of great presumption and a very ill-done trick to send it here at this time. It is a most unfortunate coincidence—if so be it is a coincidence—that it should arrive this spring. These senseless maids and men of mine will be off their heads again belyve; and it has given a shock to young Windygates, as might well have been expected. Maisie, my dear, can you devise any plan to do away with the shock, and to convince these tawpies and coofs in the kitchen that there is nothing out of nature in the picture? It is a bonnie enough picture, and well painted, as Braehead, who has travelled and is an authority, is of opinion,' went on Lady Windygates with an affectation of carelessness; 'at the same time I cannot say that I care for the subject, and I'm rather at a loss what to do with the gift.'

'Hang it over the chimney-piece in your parlour, or over the sideboard in the dining-room.' Maisie's clear, ringing voice, giving no uncertain sound, as usual, delivered her verdict.

'My dear cousin, are you mocking me?' protested Lady Windygates. 'That would never do. We have reason to believe the French lady was not all she should have been, and she was no friend of ours, not sib to us by one drop of blood, that her picture should hang where yours ought to be—in a place of honour among the family portraits.'

'She was young Windygates's friend,' persisted Maisie. 'If she was not all that she should have been, there was nothing bad in her that your son's honest eyes could see. She was good to him. But do as you like, Lady Windygates; it is you and not I who are mistress here. I only advised you, since you asked my advice, as to what I held to be the best plan of showing that you had neither fear nor doubt where the picture was concerned, and so to cure the people of their terror and suspicion.'

'Upon my word, it is very good advice,' said Braehead admiringly. 'You've a wise head on young shoulders, Mrs. Maisie.'

'I'm obliged to you for the compliment, sir, but they say that is not always a good sign,' said Maisie with a half smile as she turned to leave the room.

'After all, the picture is young Windygates's property,' said his mother, not declining to avail herself of a loophole in order to get out of the dilemma, and escape the necessity of agreeing to the distasteful proposal which she had provoked. 'It is for him to dispose of it as he thinks fit.'

'He may bring it to the Haughs if he likes,' said Maisie, stopping short and taking still higher ground. 'It can hang in my room; yes, I think that would be best of all,' she ended proudly.

'Eh! what is this?' exclaimed Braehead, interrupting the discussion. He had been continuing to inspect the picture, and had discovered something which the others had overlooked—to which, for that matter, only he and young Windygates held the clue. 'I declare,' he said, pointing to the woman's throat in the picture, 'if there is not a copy of the very jewel, the amber and gold cross, he sent her as a farewell gift that day—the day that we left and she was slain. I know all about it, for I advanced him the money to buy it; I wrote the French letter which went with it, giving her an invitation to Windygates, and, by my word, she has availed herself of it. I saw him put it up, and, since he had missed her in calling at the Hôtel de Chalons, which Allan did as often as his brief time would let him, to say good-bye, he despatched it by a *garçon* from the inn, not two hours before we started. It is not in reason that she should have happened to own a facsimile of the cross, or that she should have worn this one and had it painted into the picture, in the interval between the receipt of the packet and her following him to the gate. It

is about as incredible that her grand relations, who were out of town when it all took place, gave themselves the trouble, when they returned to Paris and heard of the tragedy, of claiming or hunting up the bit jewel, even if they had an inkling of the existence of what was little better than a brass farthing to them with their diamonds and sapphires and all their orders. Depend upon it, the cross, if Madame St. Barbe left it at home, was the spoil of some light-fingered gipsy of a waiting-woman, or, if the lady put it on as a compliment to the donor, it was doubtless broken to bits and lost in the streets, or fell into the hands of some stout-hearted *paysanne* or *grisette* in the crowd that gathered like magic. Though the Chalons had got the thing, you'll not tell me they would have it painted into the picture. What for should they bestir themselves, even though they forgave the misadventure? It is a subject which, though a trifle in itself, Braehead apologised to those who needed no apology, for wasting his valuable time, taking a pinch of snuff while he spoke, to emphasise his words, 'is rendered of some interest by the prodigious difficulties which surround it.'

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## IN DOUBT AND DESPAIR.

IN spite of the brave front which Maisie presented to her world, she 'wept sore' in the retirement of her bedroom. It was not that she was not true to the opinions she had expressed. Having no good cause, according to her just judgment, to suspect her lover, she was incapable of anything less than this noble, reasonable confidence, with its corresponding magnanimity and calmness; neither was it altogether because she fully anticipated what came to pass, in young Windygates's despairing conviction that the incident put an end to the whole matter.

He was persuaded that, in spite of what had been the nearness of his and Maisie Hunter's marriage, the publicity of its announcement, the crowning fact that the couple were well-matched, long acquainted, warmly attached, and joyfully supported, except on one ground, by their respective kindred and friends, the whole affair ought to be broken off before it was too late.

It was rather from an overwhelming sense of finding herself baffled and beaten after her first triumphant success, with her high

hopes crushed in the dust, and in passionate sympathy with Allan Windygates's misery, which she had lost all faith in her ever curing, that Maisie gave way in secret to sobs and lamentations in an extremity of woe not far removed from that of her bridegroom. She had been up to that moment, like many healthy-natured, high-spirited young women, to a large extent sufficient for herself. Everything to which she had put her hand hitherto had prospered, so far as the changes and uncertainties of human life, to which she was bound to submit, would suffer them to prosper. She had been, for her years, a helper of many, and she had carried her point and had her way even in helping others. She had been convinced, and had been innocently elated by the conviction, that she had delivered Allan Windygates and the house of Windygates from unmerited adversity, simply by her courage and fidelity. She could not tell exactly how the qualities had worked—any more than she could explain the unexampled trial: what were the natural or supernatural laws which ruled it? why had Providence allowed it? what was the use of it? where were the irrefragable proofs of its existence?—in the style of inquiry which Braehead was so fond of instituting, to which he held like a vice, as the proper balance by which every question, human or divine, ought to be weighed. Maisie had been satisfied with results, and, according to her character, her incipient girlish liking for young Windygates, whom she had teased and laughed at, had rapidly ripened to a love strong as death, and true as Heaven itself, under the impression that he had needed her, that she had saved him from his worst enemies—himself, and those spiritual foes whom she could neither measure nor behold with her bodily eyes, nor encounter on equal terms.

But from this hour Maisie was utterly staggered and shaken in her self-confidence. She had received such a blow as it was not possible she could entirely recover from. The elements of hard, narrow, self-reliant autocratism in her otherwise fine character were disturbed and unsettled. She had missed her chance of developing into the most arrogantly domineering, clever, and worthy matron on the Deerwater. She would be another, meeker, milder Maisie from this hour, even if she failed to receive farther lessons of man's littleness and God's greatness, man's incapacity and God's supremacy.

Maisie and young Windygates took one more walk among the leafless roses with the tiny red shoots, the dwarfed, half-suppressed crocuses, and the equally dwarfed and bare fruit trees, away under

the old mouldering archway which made Allan shiver as he passed beneath it, out on the crest of the hill, where the wind blew so keen in spring, and the heather was so glorious in September. There they looked down on the Deerwater, little better than a tangled skein, its main thread winding its way between woody fringes and green holms and leas, or up into the sky of palest, bleakest blue, where a heaped-up pyramid of inky grey clouds threatened fierce sleet and late snow instead of rain. For the cheery lark which had sung there the last time the two went abroad in company a couple of sparrowhawks, uttering harsh cries, were poising themselves in pursuit of prey. The young calves were safe in their stalls, the young lambs had been driven into shelter, a storm was brewing, and who would not flee from it?

Yet Maisie kept her feet in the blast which was beginning to rage on the brow of the hill, and only clung the faster to Allan's arm because of the wrench which the wind gave her.

Young Windygates, with his head bowed, turned and took refuge again in the dip of the land where the house was built, in the middle of the tempest-tossed elders and birches, which were all bending in one direction in their frantic swing. 'It is no use, Maisie, to contend farther with fate,' he said brokenly; 'it would be a tempting of Providence to let it go on—our marriage I mean; my father was right. You are the best and dearest woman in the world, and may God bless you for ever for your kindness to me and mine! But it cannot be. We must make up our minds to part, for all that has come and gone. The powers of the air or the nether deep, for what I can tell, are too many for us. Oh! my love, I'm woeful that you should suffer and be shamed for my sake, but better that than that you should become the sport of a spirit, demon, or what not, as I am condemned to be for the rest of my miserable days. I see it plainly now, in spite of your generous love and brave companionship. But, though you may grieve for a time, and folk will wonder and speak, they cannot blame you, and you will get over it and be happy again.'

'Never, Allan, if you are unhappy,' cried Maisie truly. 'I am your promised wife—do not make me break my promise; let me take your trouble for mine, as I have been fain to do, and we'll thole it together. I'm not frightened.'

He stooped and kissed her—a long lingering kiss; but he shook his head in unchangeable determination. It was not more than a couple of days since the arrival of the picture, but the old

strained, desperate look had come back to his eyes, over which, by the action of the head, his fair hair was again hanging in a heavy mass, while as he walked he thrust his clenched hand into his breast to challenge the mischief there.

‘Have you seen it since yesterday?’ she whispered with lips which even she could not keep from trembling; ‘is it true that she walks out of her picture?’

For already it was loudly said in the house that Pearlin Jean, as she was dressed in her picture, walked out of the frame, and might be met more frequently than ever. Pate had encountered it early in the morning just outside the stables. Ailie had seen it after breakfast in the china closet. Even those who had not before been haunted by the apparition began to be conscious of its presence. Jenny caught the shadow of the figure passing along the kitchen wall, and Ritchie heard the swish of its silken train through the closed door of his pantry.

But young Windygates made no answer to Maisie’s question, unless indeed silence meant consent. His lips were sealed on his intercourse with his former friend.

‘What had you done to her, sir?’ Maisie, loyal as she was to the heart’s core, could no longer keep from asking the natural question. ‘Can you not tell why she should persecute you thus?’

‘I cannot tell,’ he said hoarsely. ‘I was weak, I suppose, and I own I had forgotten you, my poor Maisie.’

‘Little blame to you,’ cried Maisie, eager to defend him from his self-accusation. ‘There was nothing between us, then, save that we had been bairns together, and that we knew we were in a manner destined for each other, because our friends wished the marriage; but oh! Allan Windygates, when I look back and think what a pert, conceited little cutty I was, I wonder you had anything to say to me.’

‘You were worth a hundred of me,’ said young Windygates with conviction, ‘and I went away and got my head stuffed with foreign maggots and forgot you. She was older than I in years, and a lifetime older in knowledge of the world. I got to depend upon her when I was recovering from my heavy sickness. But hear to me, what a clown and cur I am to throw the blame on her who died because of me! There’s the rub. That is what she asks at my hands—her life and happiness, which I can never, through either time or eternity, give her back.’

‘But she lost her life by her own wilfulness and rashness, it



was no doing of yours. If you had known she was there, you would sooner have died yourself to save her.'

'That would I,' he declared solemnly, 'but it makes no odds. It cannot bring back the dead, or redeem the past; I ought not to have let her think what she thought, and then left her at a moment's notice. I was bound, in honour and common humanity, though I did not see it in that light at the time, to tarry and have it out with her. Mind, I do not want to cast any slight on her,' he broke off excitedly; 'I will not have a word of ill said of her, even by you. She was a fine woman, the finest I had ever set eyes upon—barring one. She had done her best to pull me through the fever. If she ever wronged me, or any other, she must know, where she is, that she was far worse wronged herself, from first to last, when she was cruelly killed, by my fault, in the common streets as if she had been one of the drabs of the *halles* and the gutters.'

Hearing him speak so passionately and hopelessly, and seeing no means of helping him, while she recalled vividly all that they were to each other, and how bright their future life had seemed not a week before, Maisie lost her boasted self-control. She broke down in her faith and courage. She laid her head on his shoulder, crying out through her sobs, 'Oh, Allan, my dear love, what shall we do?'

The sight and sound drove him still farther wild.

'Do? nothing!' he said gloomily; 'and do not greet for me, Maisie Hunter—a wretch who has brought a curse on every woman that ever cared a straw for him. If it had been men, I think I could have stood it better. But look at Windygates, how he cares for women and dumb beasts. I fancied I was like him. Folk said I had my father's tender heart—I was even a thought ashamed of it. I used to go out of the way and try and steel myself when an auld horse had to be shot, ay, or even when a ferret hard bitten by the rottens was put out of its pain. Yet see, my mother is wearing herself off the face of the earth on my account. Madame St. Barbe, "Pearlin Jean" as they call her here, is in a bloody grave, and that, too, is my handiwork; and you are to be lichtlied and made the talk of the waterside by a loon like me! But better that than link your fortunes with mine. Have a care, Maisie; have nothing more to do with me, lest something worse befall you, lest you go demented in this troke with ghosts and spirits that we're forbidden to tamper with—lest the deil

himself take you. I'm sure auld Cloutie is hardly worse than I have grown.'

He broke from her and hurried away. His hat, caught by the wind and the swaying boughs, was knocked off and fell at his feet, but he did not stop to pick it up. Bareheaded and blind in his wretchedness, he went out on the tempest-scourd hills.

Whatever might befall Maisie, it was not difficult to realise that young Windygates was on the verge of *dementia*.

Maisie wept, in private, floods of tears, and poured out her heart in prayer for her lover's deliverance. Maisie was happier than many in this godless generation, she could still pray; she could still believe there was a God, and that He ruled in heaven and earth, and would bring good out of evil, and light out of darkness; that He would vindicate His mysterious ways, though they might appear without cause or purpose to mortals of a day.

French Janet or Pearlin Jean's picture, which had come from afar, stood ignominiously, with its face turned to the wall, at the farther end of the long gallery. The depositing of the picture there, with the turning of its canvas back to public view, was Lady Windygates's doing. It was simply because, in spite of her quick wit, she did not know what to do with the white elephant at the moment, since she held Maisie's proposal to be out of the question. But if there had been any thought in the lady's mind that by immediately stowing away the picture it would be out of young Windygates's way, and he might forget the inexplicable manner in which it had come to him, the ruse was worse than useless. From that moment young Windygates began to frequent the gallery incessantly, taking exercise there instead of on the breezy hillside, 'walking up and pacing down,' with his head bent, and his arms folded, as if drawn to the spot by such an irresistible spell as drags the feet of a murderer to the scene of his crime. It was in vain that Windygates drew young Windygates's arm through his, appealing to him, and remonstrating with him on what looked like suicidal folly. For Windygates no longer turned his back on his son in his terrible misfortune, but tried all the means in his manly, kindly repertory to help the lad. As for poor Lady Windygates, she was reduced to employing the veriest woman's wiles in place of briefly uttering a word of command and exacting prompt obedience, in order to keep her son from precipitating his doom. Young Windygates shook them both off, not so much with rude violence, as with the quiet doggedness of a heart-broken man—

and always, as the days went on, the flesh wasted anew on his bones and the colour fled again from his haggard cheek. Again, if there was a lurking impression on Lady Windygates's mind that a species of scornful indignity to the pretensions of Pearlin Jean in the treatment of her picture might serve to bring her to her ghostly senses, the attempt was still more fruitless—never had her attentions to the family been more pressing, while she confined her visits largely to the gallery. She had always shown a preference for the locality, and she now adopted it for her head-quarters. She had chosen it with a freedom of selection which was in itself an insulting infringement of the rights of the master and mistress of the house, whom she had failed to consult on the question. Neither did the appropriation of the particular quarter avail the household much in enabling them to avoid her unwelcome company. Nearly every public room and bedroom at Windygates had at least one door opening into the encircling gallery, and, as the doors leading elsewhere were often kept locked or boarded up, the gallery was the common and constant means of communication between the rooms and the front and back stairs. It could not be rendered otherwise without an entire overthrow of the domestic arrangements and a humiliating confession of defeat, to which Lady Windygates could not yet bring herself. Pearlin Jean displayed her reputed sharpness of intellect in thus seizing the gallery as the main artery of the house and the key to the situation, from which she could conduct her onslaughts on her victims with the utmost facility.

In fact, so impossible was it for maids and men to keep to any extent out of Pearlin Jean's way by avoiding the gallery, which had become a place of dread, while they discharged their ordinary service, that, notwithstanding the advancing season and lengthening daylight, Ailie and Pate, who were understood to have least support from their consciences, gave warning of their departure at the next term. Jenny and Ritchie, with the odd boy and the whole staff of grooms and ploughmen, their wives and children, were understood, in a spirit of bovine gregariousness and appalled superstition, to be contemplating a similar step. If the present servants abandoned their posts, what others would dare to fill their predecessors' shoes? There was danger of the Wedderburns of Windygates being practically boycotted in their own house, a couple of centuries or so before the word was introduced into the national vocabulary.

Yet, if the subject had been closely inquired into, the truth would have been ascertained that in the second outbreak as in the first there was a certain method in the whole abnormal circumstances, and that there were laws to guide the sufferers and secure them from loss. Let us recapitulate the data. There were impartial witnesses of undeniable credit, such as good Mr. Hyndford, who, from his great age, stood on the verge of another world, and little Anaple Boyd, who, from hereditary disease, was hovering on the borderland of early decline and death, for which she was ripe betimes. Nothing save stiff-necked, narrow-souled incredulity like that of Braehead could refuse to accept their testimony, which at the same time carried with it the consolation that the man and the child had received no injury from their involuntary acquaintance with Pearlin Jean. She had done them no harm; she had not even scared the weaker of the two, to any appreciable extent. Mr. Hyndford had been full of pity for the wandering spirit as well as for young Windygates. Poor sick little Anaple had said her prayers and felt assured that nothing could really harm her.

The next class of witnesses was made up of self-condemned culprits like Pate and Ailie, who were primed to start at their own shadows. Following in their wake came a crowd of empty-headed, open-mouthed dolts and hysterical fools, who always flourish at an extraordinary crisis. No man or woman in the thick of life's business, and full of its interests, sound of mind and sound of body, upright, reasonable—like Windygates and Lady Windygates, and Maisie Hunter—had seen or heard Pearlin Jean.

Young Windygates was out of count, as mixed up with the disaster which lay at the root of the horrible dilemma. On the other hand, Braehead had shared in the unfortunate accident, and he only confessed reluctantly to having seen 'something,' which might have been sunset clouds over the gateway on the night of his return with his charge from France. For anything more, he spoke with conceited pedantry of *lusus naturæ*, as if that would lend any light to a tormented soul in a horror of great darkness. But Braehead was always a hardened unbeliever.

The course and conditions of the ghost-plague were not unlike those which accompany the strange disease known as hydrophobia, and there was a point in both when the nervous infection threatened to break all bounds and defy control. It had not yet reached this pass at Windygates, but it was very near it.

Windygates himself no longer cared to look over his shoulder, though he still forced himself to do it when he was left alone after supper. Lady Windygates, whose fine little face was getting daily more shrivelled over with a network of wrinkles, had the greatest difficulty to refrain from turning aside her head—with a pretence to herself of having her attention suddenly attracted in the opposite direction—in order to avoid looking into any mirror which she happened to be passing when the evening shadows were falling. Maisie Hunter paused in her midnight weeping to tell herself, with her heart thumping against her side, that the rattling at the window was done by no skeleton fingers. It was but the shaking of the fastening by the wind, which was a familiar spirit at Windygates, rising anew at the turn of the night, and blowing with such force as to catch up the sand and small stones in the path without and cast them against the panes. The moaning sighs were the same wind whistling through the keyhole. The faint stir and scurry which made themselves distinguished when there was a lull in the other sounds proceeded from nothing more terrible than a mouse behind the wainscot.

The true state of the case, with the arrested preparations for young Windygates's marriage to the heiress of the Haughs, was another nine days' wonder up and down the water. Gossips' tongues wagged with vigour, and some of Maisie's disbanded suitors began to prick up their ears as at another chance for them. Poor young Windygates was much to be pitied if he had not been somehow sorely to blame. It was an awful dispensation. It was all his mother's doing. She was a high-headed wife, who would have her son different from other wives' sons, and truly she had her will. But bonnie, witty, well-tochered Maisie Hunter was not to be left in her clutches. There was no call for her being bewitched in her turn; she had suffered enough already.

Auntie Peggie was quite of this opinion. She sent a peremptory message to her grand-niece by a second pair of cousins who were staying at the Haughs, come to help Maisie in the dismally arrested wedding preparations. She accompanied the message by a strict injunction to the messengers that they were not to return to the old lady without bringing Maisie along with them.

But Maisie brought the cousins round to her way of thinking, and she wrote a piteous entreating letter to the relative who stood in the place of father and mother to her. It was the humblest letter Maisie ever wrote. It implored Auntie Peggie to

forgive the child whom she had reared so kindly and carefully for not at once doing her bidding. It entreated her to remember that, if 'bowls had rolled smoothly,' she, Maisie, would have been by this time young Windygates's wedded wife, and no power on earth could have separated them—no righteous man or woman would have wished to come between them. Jephthah allowed his daughter two months in which to bewail her virginity: would Auntie Peggy not grant her bairn another week in which, if her plighted bridegroom were not delivered from his ghost weird, she, his unhappy bride, would take leave of him for ever in this world? She asked but this one favour from her dear, true, and loving Auntie Peggy, to save her poor Maisie's heart-strings from cracking outright. If she had her way, and no light of hope appeared above the dark horizon, she solemnly promised to return to the Haughs and never quit it more. She would have gone straight home and knelt down at Auntie Peggy's knees, where Maisie used to say her prayers, and begged the grace in person, but she could not bear to look even her oldest friend in the face till all was over—one way or another.

Windygates would be sorry to see Maisie go, and yet her departure would be a relief to his conscience; while Lady Windygates, proud and dour, clung to the girl's remaining among them as to the last stay still held out to the man sinking into the gulf, from which nothing else could deliver him. But young Windygates hardly noticed whether his love stayed or went, his malady had such deadly hold of him; he had already drifted so far away from her—he was so many fathoms down in the abyss which must swallow up at last intellect, affections, human interests—all that constituted the man.

*(To be concluded.)*



